CHRISTIAN THAL

M·E·FRANCIS

614/ed

~~B. 1. 25~~
45

ed

CHRISTIAN THAL

UNIV. OF CALIF. LIBRARY, LOS ANGELES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

IN A NORTH COUNTRY VILLAGE
THE STORY OF DAN
A DAUGHTER OF THE SOIL
MAIME O' THE CORNER
FRIEZE AND FUSTIAN
AMONG THE UNTRODDEN WAYS
MISS ERIN
THE DUENNA OF A GENIUS
YEOMAN FLEETWOOD
PASTORALS OF DORSET
FIANDER'S WIDOW
NORTH, SOUTH, AND OVER THE SEA
THE MANOR FARM

CHRISTIAN THAL

A Novel

BY

M. E. FRANCIS

(Mrs. Francis Blundell)

Author of "Fiander's Widow," "Yeoman Fleetwood," "The Duenna of a Genius," "The Manor Farm" etc., etc.

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO

91 and 93 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

LONDON AND BOMBAY

1903

COPYRIGHT, 1902, BY
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

All rights reserved

Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

TO

THOSE MAKERS OF MUSIC

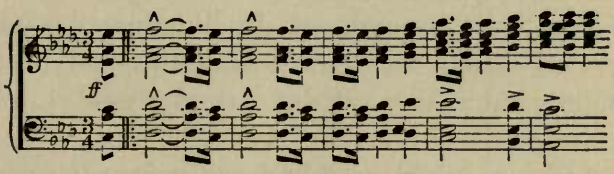
WHO HAVE BROUGHT JOY INTO MY LIFE

2129805

CHRISTIAN THAL

PART I

CHAPTER I



"ALL that luggage on one carriage—and with three persons inside. No, that will not do. And where, then, do the highborn Herrschaften desire to go? To the Schöne Aussicht? Da oben." Here the driver of the Droschke paused dramatically, and threw out his hand with an expressive upward sweep. "Right up there in the woods? But no; it is impossible—unmöglich. The gracious gentry must engage another carriage—an Einspanner will do. That, they know, can take up the big baggage; and the Herrschaften and the small-and-required-for-immediate-use-packages can remain where they are."

The tall white-haired gentleman whom the coachman addressed made no reply to this persuasive harangue, but contemplated the speaker with a calmly thoughtful air, almost as though he had not heard. The young girl by his side, however, signalled hastily to the nearest one-horse fly, detecting, as it approached, a satisfied wink exchanged by the drivers of the respective vehicles, while even the stolid Teutonic faces of the porters were momentarily illuminated.

The elderly energetic maid, who had been standing by the piled-up truck, now came forward.

"If you would get Mr. Lennox into the carriage, miss, I could follow with the luggage," she suggested. "There wasn't any necessity for taking that other one; we could all have fitted quite well, and the luggage too; but since it's here ——"

"Have you observed, Juliet," remarked the gentleman, rousing himself as his daughter laid her hand on his arm, "have you observed what a magnificent head our driver has? It would quite interest me to learn his history. Do you notice the brow, and that curious width between the eyes? The fellow should be a dreamer."

"Get in, dear, won't you?" said Juliet, in a gentle persuasive tone. "Andrews will follow

with the luggage. We have a long drive before us, and it is rather cold standing just here."

Mr. Lennox pulled vaguely at the collar of his coat, as though with the intention of turning it up, but failed to accomplish his purpose, and continued to speculate as he mounted slowly into the vehicle.

"It would not at all surprise me to learn that this man *was* a dreamer. If you come to think of it, the very life he leads would conduce to the development of the imaginative faculty. His employment, you see, does not exercise his intellect at all: after the slight effort of memory required for registering the street and house to which he is bound, his task becomes purely mechanical. Eye and hand work automatically, so to speak — You are not listening to me."

Juliet, indeed, had been busily occupied in stowing away their travelling paraphernalia in various corners of the carriage, and was at that moment in the act of buttoning her father's coat.

"You are not listening to me," he repeated, his dark eyes full of reproach, his white brows slightly drawn together. "What do these men want? Where is my purse, child?"

"I have paid the porters, sir; you don't need

to give them any more," put in Andrews, pushing aside the clamouring Gepäckträger, who, taking note of the English gentleman's weakness with regard to the Einspanner, deemed he might safely be imposed upon a little further.

With sudden irritation the old man turned upon them, upbraiding them in fluent German with a severity which caused them to draw back, abashed. He turned to Juliet with a smile, however, as the coachman whipped up his horses.

"At least my driver is no rogue," he said.

The girl, calling to mind the exceedingly knowing expression which she had recently observed in the far-apart orbs of the gentleman in question, was conscious of certain doubts, but was careful to keep them to herself.

"Conceive," went on her father, pursuing his former train of thought, "conceive the variety of experiences which must fall to this man's lot. Imagine the different aspects of life that are daily presented to him. From his coign of vantage there" — indicating the box — "he can look on at an ever-flowing, ever-changing tide of life — life which sweeps round him and in which he has no part. To-day he encounters tragedy, perhaps; to-morrow comedy. All manner of people sit in his vehicle; he stops before

all sorts of places; he comes into momentary contact with his fellow-creatures of every kind and degree, in every variety of mood; they go their ways and pass out of his life, and he remains unmoved, unaffected by it all. Don't you think all that is enough to give him food for reflection, little girl?"

He smiled at her, pensively. Juliet smiled too with a quaint little air of tender indulgence, which contrasted oddly with their relation to each other and with her extreme youth.

Though she was very slenderly fashioned, and possessed of more grace of carriage than is usual in maidens scarcely more than half-way through their teens, she conveyed an impression of immaturity that was almost childishness. Her long silky fair hair was tied back with a ribbon; her skirts were not by any means of fashionable length. Moreover, as she glanced about her now, her face wore a look of expectancy so complete, so blissful, that it could only have been assumed by one to whom the whole world was fresh and delightful.

Juliet's eyes were very large and expressive. They were set sufficiently wide apart to please her fastidious father, and were in colour hazel, deepening sometimes to velvety brown, and at other times appearing to be full of golden light.

Her brow was wide and high, her complexion very fair, the texture of the skin being exquisitely fine; for the rest it was a small face, conveying an impression of unusual intelligence, and, moreover, an indefinite suggestion of spirituality; a face which, without being regularly beautiful, somehow charmed all beholders.

Now Professor Lennox on the other hand was strikingly handsome though he looked old — too old for his years. His tall figure was bent with study, his abundant hair, like the drooping moustache which shielded a too sensitive mouth, had been prematurely bleached by sorrow.

The droschke rattled along the Kaiser Strasse, past the green arcades which earned its name — Schönwald — for the little town, and the pretty gardens with their fountains and stretches of water; past the gay shops, and up the Berg Strasse, up, up, always overshadowed by greenery, until at last streets and even solitary houses were left behind, and there remained only the woods.

What woods! Towering beeches, sturdy oaks, graceful slender birches, with here and there a pine, ruddy of stem and gloomy of foliage. At this hour of the September afternoon the al-

most level rays of the sun came piercing through the branches, falling upon white-stemmed beeches and birches with dazzling, silvery radiance, turning the trunks of the firs to gold, bringing out a wonderful glow from the undulating ground beneath, which was thickly sown with the fallen leaves of many a year.

All round, what unexpected jewels of light, afloat, as it were, in the gentle green dusk! Here a leaf looking like a living emerald, there a flame of yellow, above the lambent blue of the sky; and now and then, where the trees grew less thickly, a curious effect of pearly, almost ethereal radiance, a kind of shimmering oasis in this desert of exquisite gloom.

Juliet suddenly rose from her seat with a gasp:

"Oh, look, Daddy," she cried, "look! Is not this enchanted ground? Do look at those trees; see how they are stretching out their arms to us. Listen to the leaves talking overhead. What are they saying? Don't you think they are promising us all kinds of good things?"

Her father looked at her and smiled; then a shadow fell upon his face.

"You are very like your mother, Baby," he said.

"Baby" was the name he had given his wife, and he only used it to Juliet in moments of supreme tenderness.

After a moment he went on. "You have more imagination than your mother; she was very observant — a witty creature too," with a sigh, "but she was not fanciful like you, Juliet; and neither am I very imaginative — I wonder how you came by this faculty."

"I'm a freak," said Juliet. "But don't you pretend you are not imaginative, Daddy. What about your contemplative cabman?"

"Ah, that is another thing," said her father, and he launched forth once more into a discussion of their driver's rare opportunities, his sadness laid aside for the nonce.

Presently they arrived at the Schöne Aussicht, a big, rambling, brand-new building, the barrack-like appearance of which was atoned for by its exquisite surroundings.

Shortly after their installation, the Professor came into Juliet's room, as she stood by the open window, drinking in the pure keen air, and letting her eyes wander over the wilderness of woods, the distant blue hills, and the little town which nestled in the valley below, and which was already making itself gay with a multiplicity of lights.

"My dear," he said, "this is not what I expected."

"Isn't it, Daddy? It is far more beautiful than I hoped for."

"Oh, yes, I dare say it is very beautiful, but I did not come here because of the view, you see; I came because I wanted to be quiet; I can't be quiet in London, and I can't be quiet at home."

"Yet most people think Moor's Hill quiet enough," put in the girl. "I don't believe anyone but my Professor would call it distractingly lively."

"My darling child," said the Professor, earnestly, so earnestly that he was obliged to walk close up to Juliet and put his hands upon her shoulders, "my darling child, don't tell me that it is possible for any man to think, much less to study, in a country-place. Those cows alone; those cocks — oh, I sympathise with Carlyle. And the deer — when I know the deer are to be seen from my windows, how is it possible to avoid looking at and watching their movements and their manners? Yes, that is the worst of it; I get interested in the creatures, and can't for the life of me help observing them. Do you remember how I once lost a whole valuable morning because I knew that an impudent

little squirrel was catering for his larder close under my window?"

He laughed at the recollection, but Juliet's face assumed an alarmed, not to say tragic expression.

"Do you know I'm afraid there are squirrels here; I am almost sure I saw one just now."

"Squirrels!" said Mr. Lennox, inconsequently waving his hand, as though the subject were too trivial to be dwelt upon, "Squirrels! If we had nothing worse than poor little harmless squirrels to fear, I should not complain. But there are *people* here, I find — people actually staying in the house, and, what is more, they come up by shoals every fine day to take coffee under the trees in front — right under my room. I felt alarmed when I saw the tables, so I questioned the waiter, and he informed me with the greatest triumph and jubilation that not only were there seven or eight 'stück' staying in the house, but that, as I tell you, crowds come up in the afternoon."

"Never mind," said Juliet, soothingly, "you shall change rooms with me, dear; you can see nothing but woods and hills from this window, with just a glimpse of a little fairy town, far, far beneath."

"No, miss, that he isn't," returned Andrews, with prompt decision. "I caught sight of him just now going into his room; a handsome young gentleman, too, but not an Englishman — you have only to look at his head to see that. I often wonder to myself, miss," she continued ruminatively — long service entitled her to be as garrulous as she chose, and her lonely young mistress was often glad to prolong such conversations — "I often wonder to myself, miss, how it is that them foreign gentlemen never seem able to leave their heads alone. Now our English gentlemen wash and brush them, and have their hair cut every fortnight, say, and there's an end of it; but these foreigners, they must be either shaving their heads, or trimming their hair like hearthbrushes, or else letting it grow long."

"And what variety of head does this young man possess?" inquired Juliet, laughing.

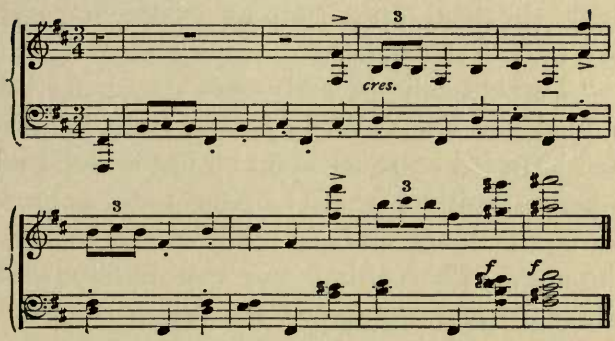
"Well, miss, I may have seemed to be finding fault with it, but upon my word I can't help saying so, he has a beautiful head of hair."

"Then it is long, I suppose?"

"Well, not that long either, miss — not right down his neck like some have. But, anyhow, you'll see this young gentleman for yourself at l*tablio*."

"Tablio" was Andrews' rendering of *table d'hôte.* Mr. Lennox would have preferred dining in a private room, but finding that the public meals amused Juliet, he kept his wishes to himself, and daily sat out eight or nine courses with praiseworthy patience.

CHAPTER II



WHEN the gong sounded for supper the father and daughter went downstairs together, being ushered into the Speisesaal with great pomp by the head waiter.

"Do you see?" murmured the Professor to his daughter as, on the invitation of this functionary, they took their seats at a table in an alcove at the further end of the room, "there are quite a number of people here — four tables are prepared, you observe, besides that one in the balcony. What *did* Countess de Galphi mean by saying that after the Schönwald season was over this place was deserted?"

Juliet scarcely heard him, she was anxiously on the look-out for the young gentleman with the beautiful head.

The diners strolled in by twos and threes; and though her eyes remained fixed upon the door, she kept up a running commentary for her father's benefit.

"Two old ladies, Daddy — two such terrible old ladies. One is very thin and looks as if she had been fed on sauer-kraut all her life, and the other — positively she is a perfect cube, as broad as she is long, and as thick the other way through. Poor thing, she can hardly walk, she is trotting along just like those little toys that they sell in the Strand, you know — you wind them up, and they only cost a penny, and they break directly you've bought them — Really, Daddy, if you'd just turn your head you'd see what I mean."

The Professor did not turn his head, but he smiled benevolently.

"Now, there is a man coming," she continued — "that's not he" — (this half to herself) — "a man with an ugly nice face; oh," dropping her voice — "he's coming to the table next ours, so I can't enter into details. And now there's a jolly-looking elderly lady, who is making a regal bow to the waiters — I wonder if that's

the princess. She is followed by a tall woman with a young back and an oldish face — perhaps that's the dame de compagnie. It *is* the princess, for I see she is being ushered into the balcony, away from the common herd. Poor thing, she must find it rather chilly out there at this time of night; and really, if it wasn't for the honour and glory of the thing, she might just as well sit inside, for the door is left open and she is in full view of the multitude. . . . And now" — her voice changed and she paused for a moment, and then leaned towards her father:

"Look round, Daddy; do, please, look round. You are so fond of analysing faces — tell me what you think of this one. Do you see the boy who is coming in now? He has a remarkable head, if you like."

Mr. Lennox turned in his chair and looked in the direction she indicated. A tall young man was just entering the room, and Juliet had identified him at first sight as the hero of Andrews' tale. His head was indeed a remarkable one, quite apart from the fact that the hair, nutbrown in colour and with golden lights, was, according to English notions, a little too artistically redundant. The brow was high, massive, with great fulness over the eyes which were large

with elongated corners; the features fine and clear-cut, the mouth in particular being sensitive and very handsome. The whole face had in it something of the statuesque, to which its pallor conduced — the pallor that belongs to the type and is associated with a peculiarly transparent and fine-grained skin but conveys no idea of delicacy. Any such suggestion, indeed, would have been contradicted by the vigour of the tall, well-knit frame.

"A beautiful boy," said the Professor, approvingly, after considering him for a moment. "You did well to call my attention to him, Juliet — you have shown me something worth looking at."

"But what do you see in his face?" cried the girl, eagerly. "Look at his brow — don't you think he must *do* something?"

Mr. Lennox returned to his quiet scrutiny, and Juliet, too, furtively watched. The young man, feeling their eyes upon him, sent a long penetrating glance in their direction, taking in the newcomers from head to foot, apparently, and then fell to examining the menu, drumming meanwhile upon the table.

"I know what he is," exclaimed Juliet, suddenly; "he is a musician. Look at his hands; see how he plays upon the table. It is not

merely the Devil's Tattoo, you see. He is playing octaves — and now a little bit of chromatic scale, and now he is stretching his fingers — that man can take ten notes easily."

"He might be a musician," said her father, still reflectively contemplating the youth in question. "That fulness about the brows would seem to indicate it. And his face altogether — yes, it certainly belongs to the artistic type. But who is his companion I wonder? Her face, Juliet, is quite as interesting in its own way — not in such an agreeable way, I grant you, but what power, what tenacity of purpose! Look at the jaw and chin. That woman has got a will."

A lady had hastily entered and crossed the room to the table where the young man sat, a table so far away from the alcove occupied by Juliet and her father, that, as may have been divined, the discussion could be carried on without risk. The newcomer was of middle height and of indeterminate age; her strong dark face, with its heavy brows and marked features, had probably never looked young, and certainly did not look young now, recording as it did many sufferings and disillusions in hard and bitter lines. These momentarily disappeared when she smiled, the whole face softening then and

brightening in a way that was not without its charm. She smiled now, as she paused a moment beside her companion, resting her hand upon his arm while she glanced over his shoulder at the menu; but her face almost immediately darkened again as she looked up with some evidently petulant remark. She shrugged her shoulders and sat down, not again speaking to him, but looking round the room while waiting to be served.

It was the custom of the Schöne Aussicht to invite its guests to supper long before the meal was actually ready. Now, though they had been summoned nearly a quarter of an hour before, the first dish had not yet appeared. Meanwhile the Lennoxes' nearest neighbour, the man with the "nice ugly face" — to quote from Juliet's description — had been listening with quiet amusement to their various remarks and surmises. His dark moustache twitched from time to time, his eyes, small and of no definite colour, but set about with kindly lines, twinkled. When Juliet had announced her discovery as to the nature of the young man's career he had nodded almost imperceptibly; but presently he fell to considering her father with an eager interest, only withdrawing his eyes when they had attracted the Professor's

own. Then he produced a newspaper which he perused during the pauses in the repast. Had the girl been less preoccupied she would have been interested in discovering that the paper in question was the *Standard*, for though the arrangement of his hair — what remained of it — would not have called forth any strictures from Andrews, this man did not look like an Englishman.

But Juliet was absorbed in her musician. She watched his face and took note of how sensitive it was, how mobile; how it lit up when he smiled; she watched his hands, long and supple and always restless, now fingering his sleeve, now the table: she almost fancied she could distinguish the air he was playing.

By-and-bye, quite suddenly, he pushed away his plate, got up, and went out of the room. His companion looked after him, half rose from her chair, and then, with a momentary lifting of the eyebrows, resumed her supper. The room now seemed to Juliet to have grown dull and empty, the meal to be insufferably long. She lifted a corner of the curtain nearest to her and looked out at the placid starlit night.

"Shall we go out after supper, Daddy?"

"Not to-night, dear. I will do a little work, I think. I must secure an hour or two while the house is quiet."

"May I walk in the woods with Andrews then? They are so inviting. It will be cool and delicious after this stuffy room. Look out at the dear trees: they are beckoning to me."

"You may go if you do not stray away too far. Andrews is a host in herself, and I should think these woods are very safe and quiet."

But when Juliet made the same proposition to Andrews on going upstairs, it was not by any means so well received.

"Go out now, Miss Juliet, when there's so much to be done? All these boxes must be unpacked before bedtime; and when am I to get my supper?"

"I forgot your supper," said the girl, penitently, but with evident disappointment.

That of course settled the question. She knew Andrews too well to dream of interfering with what she often called "the sacred meal." She went to the window, threw it open, and leaned out. Oh, the woods, the woods! She had told her father just now that they were beckoning to her; as she leaned forth into the

fresh sweet night they seemed to woo her. What music of swaying boughs, of rustling leaves — all the indescribable forest sounds! What gusts of cool spicy air, what mystery in those dim aisles, where only here and there a silver pillar caught the moonlight.

"Andrews," she said suddenly, "I must go down there and stand under the trees for a few moments. They come close under this window, and you could hear me if I called. You can go on with your unpacking. I will stay quite near the house; I only want to feel the woods about me before I go to bed."

Andrews was beginning to expostulate, but Juliet was already gone. The back-stairs close to her room led down to a door, used chiefly by the hotel servants. Juliet met no one, and slipped out, past the kennel where the great dog greeted her with a warning growl, across the grassy slope beyond; beneath the trees at last. She singled out a group of firs, and going up to one patted its rough bark caressingly.

"You are a warrior," she said; "you shall be my sentinel and take care of me."

She remained quite still, gazing about her, and inhaling the delicious fragrance. But all at once she started violently. A figure brushed

past her, went forward a little way, and then, returning, came close up to her, bending forward as if to speak. Juliet, indeed, in her white dress looked sufficiently ethereal and unreal to have startled anyone at this hour, but it was she herself who was frightened at the silent advance of this shadowy form. It was a woman's form, moving with swift noiseless grace, the face still bent forward, as though the eyes would pierce the gloom.

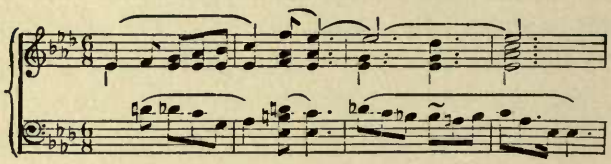
Presently an arm shot forward and seized Juliet by the wrist. The girl screamed. The other, with a laugh and a half contemptuous shrug, turned and glided away as quietly as she had come.

Juliet drew a long breath of relief; she had recognised the musician's companion. But she was trembling still; the woods were very lonely after all, and the distant trees took odd shapes, and the noises sounded more mysterious than ever — almost uncanny in fact. The charm was broken; in another moment she was flying across the moonlit space and up the steps, the big dog adding to her terror by barking violently and dragging at his chain. In characteristic fashion, however, she immediately composed herself, walked deliberately upstairs, and made no allusion to her momentary panic when

Andrews commented upon her unexpectedly speedy return.

"It was growing rather chilly out there," she remarked. Nevertheless, going once more to the window, she was soon again absorbed in the beauty of the night.

CHAPTER III



"JULIET, Juliet."

"Yes, Daddy dear."

"I find it quite impossible to work — I cannot even collect my thoughts for a moment. It is maddening! It ought not to be allowed."

The Professor's eyes were flashing fire; he had run his fingers distractedly through his hair so often that it stood out like a snowy nimbus round his head; his lip was actually quivering with wrath and woe; his hands were twitching.

"Daddy, what is the matter?"

"My dear child, don't you hear it? It has been going on for an hour and a half; and it is now nearly eleven o'clock. It is monstrous — enough to drive one out of one's senses! If one is not to have quiet at this time of night, when can one count on it? I'll

speak to the manager at once. I'll put a stop to it."

"But, dear Daddy, do tell me what *is* it," pleaded Juliet, almost piteously.

"You don't hear it in this room — you are fortunate! What do I mean? Oh, don't be dense, child! I mean the piano, the piano of course. Come to my room and you'll hear it."

In the Professor's room the distant sound of a piano could indeed be heard, but so muffled and far-away that the tune was not distinguishable.

"That makes it all the worse," cried Mr. Lennox, when Juliet had put forth this plea. "One finds oneself unconsciously endeavouring to identify it. But I will make an end of this. I will tell the manager he has no right to tolerate a public nuisance."

"Oh, don't," cried Juliet, eagerly. "Please don't. I know it is that boy we saw downstairs: you remember you admired his face. I am sure he is poor. Andrews says he has got a room right up at the top among all the servants. Perhaps he is obliged to practise, and if the manager forbids him to use this piano he mayn't be able to play anywhere else. I'll — I'll run down and ask him to stop for to-night, and then to-morrow you can change rooms with me."

Her father, still pacing up and down, gave a somewhat irritable consent, and the girl went quickly downstairs, pausing irresolutely, however, when she had reached the long corridor below. She could hear the music more distinctly now, and recognised the theme, Chopin's Ballade in A flat, played in masterly fashion. Guided by the sound she went forward to the reading room, which she entered very softly. The "beautiful boy," as the Professor called him, was, as she expected, seated at the piano, which was placed so that it faced the door. The little instrument, though old and worn, had been a good one in its day; it now rocked beneath his strenuous touch, and now sent forth sounds of magical sweetness.

Juliet paused just within the doorway, amazed, entranced, bewildered. What made this music unlike any she had ever heard? She had heard much, for she loved it passionately, and her father had spared no pains in the cultivation of this taste. Already she had listened to many noted players, but there was something about *this* player that seemed to set him apart from them all. In the same way the Ballade, every note of which was familiar to her, revealed, under his fingers, beauties which had hitherto been hidden from her, poetry which she could

all at once interpret, but of which until now she had not possessed the key.

By-and-bye she recovered herself sufficiently to look about her.

At the further end of the room sat the princess and her companion, listening in a kind of condescending ecstasy, and murmuring "Wunderschön," or "Ausgezeichnet!" from time to time.

The musician's friend stood by the piano with her hands behind her, and her face rigidly set, apparently keeping guard; the man who had been the Lennoxes' neighbour at supper was also in the room, and outside the open window was gathered a little crowd of listening waiters and subordinates.

The player himself seemed quite unaware of his audience.

Juliet had observed with disappointment earlier in the evening that he did not appear to be wholly devoid of self-consciousness; his very mode of entering and leaving the room had denoted that he was aware of, and not averse to, attracting attention; once or twice, to her confusion, he had caught her glance, and had returned it with one which seemed to say, "Yes, look at me; I am a person of importance." But now he was wholly absorbed; his

face was almost majestic in its repose, if that could be called repose which mirrored such manifold emotion. The eyes were downcast, the mouth firmly set, yet, just as the glassy water of a lake reflects all that passes across its surface, from a thunder-cloud to a butterfly, so did this face gather power as the strong, supple hands came down upon the keys in full grand chords, and soften as the music grew more tender, and become dreamy and inspired with his theme.

Juliet's courage failed as she remembered her errand; at least she would wait, she thought, until he paused before venturing to put forward her father's plea. But he did not pause. At the conclusion of the Ballade, and without lifting his fingers from the keys, he passed, after a few modulations, into the Berceuse which he played with such exquisite delicacy and grace, that Juliet was fairly transported. The poor Professor's irritation and her own anxiety to prevent his personal interference were alike forgotten; she was conscious of nothing but the music flooding her soul.

"Enough!" said a decided voice in German, almost before the last notes had died away. Juliet started as violently as the musician, but he recovered himself immediately, and turned

round to cast an angry glance on his companion, who had stepped up to his chair and laid an imperative hand on his shoulder.

"What does that mean: *enough?* It is not enough. Here I am, and here I mean to stay."

"Enough, I tell you," she returned. "Why are we here then? That you may continue to wear yourself out? I will not allow it. Aber was! You want to be in the doctor's hands again, I suppose? Come, come — to bed!"

He shook off her hand.

"I will do what I like; I am not a child. Go away, Annola. You are tiresome. I wish to play, and I will play."

Annola composedly walked up to the nearest chandelier, and making a series of upward springs, extinguished one after the other of the flaming gas jets.

The ugly man looked up with a laugh, and rose.

"Good night," he said to the player, in English, but with a slight foreign accent. "You have given me a great deal of pleasure; I thank you very much."

"Good night," returned the musician, shortly, and with a formal bow; he was moodily watching the movements of Annola who was now at work on the second chandelier.

The group outside the window melted away, and the princess and her companion who had hitherto been mute, now rose in their turn and came forward with little sliding curtsies and enthusiastic compliments. The young man got up from his chair, and again bowed, stiffly and unsmilingly.

"Come, you are on your feet at last!" cried his friend. "You give me a great deal of trouble, you know. Well, are you coming, or must I finish this business?"

"What a bother you are, Annola! I hate you!"

This was spoken with a real boy's peevishness. Annola's face changed; she turned and came close up to him, saying something in a language which Juliet, now the only other occupant of the room, did not understand — an odd-sounding language that seemed to be made up of little words and to redound in vowels.

He flushed and bit his lips; then his face softened, and he stooped with a laugh and kissed her hand; after which without further protest he closed the piano.

A certain shyness had kept Juliet in her place at the further end of the room; she had not dared to thank the musician as everyone else

had done, and she thought it would seem ungracious to go away without a word. In the semi-darkness, consequent on Annola's operations, her presence would not be noticed by the preoccupied pair, she fancied, and when they were gone, she, too, would slip upstairs to make what apologies she could to her father.

But before they had reached the door she heard Annola reply to some murmured query of the other:

"It is the little one whom I saw in the woods just now — die kleine Engländerin. I took her for a ghost, you know. But I told you about it, Dummkopf!"

The young man unexpectedly turned aside, and went straight up to the shrinking little figure in its retirement.

"You like the woods very much?" he inquired in slow deliberate English, "did you also like my music?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Juliet, and stopped short, catching her breath. He had taken her by surprise, and in any case she was incapable of expressing in words how much, how very much she had liked his music. But he looked at her transfigured face, and was satisfied.

"Then I will play again. It was for myself before; now it shall be for you."

Annola glanced sharply round, but made no remark; and before Juliet, once more conscience-stricken, had had time to stammer a reply, his fingers were again wandering over the notes. How indeed could she have had the heart to object to what was so kindly meant: surely this would not have been the moment to make a protest which, no matter how delicately worded, must be, to a certain extent, wounding?

"You have been wandering in the moonlight — you shall hear about the moonlight," he said, suddenly breaking off in his prelude and at once beginning the first movement of the Sonata in C sharp minor.

A more competent critic than Juliet would have been struck by the perfection of his rendering, would have marked how amid all its poetry it never lost the perfect sincerity and simplicity which is essential to the just interpretation of Beethoven. To the girl the wonderful music was fraught with the very essence of the woods; it brought back to her all the impressions which had seized her at first sight of them: the wonder, the delight — a delight which was not so much the consciousness of actual bliss as a promise, an anticipation of some intangible future joy.

Presently the door opened and Professor Lennox came in, his face dark, not so much with displeasure, as with disappointment. Juliet had failed to keep her promise, she had unexpectedly proved to be deficient in that moral courage for which he had always given her credit.

On first entering, however, his sense of just wrath gave place to bewilderment. The large room was very imperfectly lighted, all the jets of gas near the piano having been extinguished; the young man, however, was playing with as much zest and unconcern as though the evening were but just beginning; and Juliet, his little Juliet whom he had expected to find in an attitude of shrinking timidity, nervously waiting the moment when she might deliver her message, Juliet was sitting with rapt upturned face — even in the dusk he could see its silhouette against the dark velvet chair, the lips parted, the large eyes wide open — Juliet was listening in evident ecstasy.

All at once she turned and saw him, and before he had time to summon her she rose noiselessly and came swiftly towards him. There was no penitence in her face, only delight.

"Daddy, Daddy," she whispered as soon as she was near enough, "is it not beautiful? And only think, he is playing it for me!"

Now the Professor was endowed with a very keen sense of humour, so genuine a sense that he many a time positively enjoyed a laugh against himself. He laughed now, and putting his arm round her, drew her down beside him on the sofa.

"Oh, Daddy," she murmured, drawing a deep breath, "Daddy, is not this very good?"

The Professor listened for a moment, and then darted a keen glance from under his white brows at the musician.

"Yes, Baby; it is very good."

There was something magnetic in the quality of this playing; it charmed the old man as it had charmed the girl. Mr. Lennox had come downstairs irritated, and with nerves on edge; his predominant feeling towards the player being strong dislike; yet before he had listened to him for five minutes he succumbed to his influence. Despite his recent annoyance, no one loved music better than the Professor; it was perhaps his very love for it that had caused him to feel so intensely irritated with the persistent recurrence of sounds too distant to be identified, yet sufficiently penetrating to be perpetually intrusive — to the detriment of fixed and serious thought. He listened now with a softened face, sometimes glancing ten-

derly at Juliet's shining eyes and glowing cheeks, and at other times gazing intently at the player.

"That young man interests me," he said, half to himself as the final notes were struck, "there is something electric in his personality. He will go far in his career."

This agreeable prognostication he repeated a few moments later to the musician himself, shaking him warmly by the hand the while. The young man flushed with pleasure and thanked him repeatedly.

"Ah," he said with an expressive gesture, "but it is so long to wait. I want to begin my career now."

"'Tout vient à qui sait attendre,'" said the Professor, smiling. "Proverbs are useful things sometimes, particularly for young people."

"Monsieur, you are wrong," said Annola, turning on him suddenly. "Proverbs are foolish and may often be read in different ways. You English, for instance, might translate the one you have just quoted, 'Everything comes to him who knows how to expect.'"

"No, no, we are more sensible than that," cried Mr. Lennox, laughing. "We have, on the contrary, a saying, 'Blessed is he that expecteth not, for he shall not be disappointed.'"

"But I, for one, expect much," cried the youth, his face again flushing. "I expect everything, and so according to Annola's theory everything will come to me."

"But no, but no," cried Annola, speaking rapidly and excitedly. "I say on the contrary, Tout vient à qui n'attend rien. My God, yes! Everything comes, sorrow, disappointment, disillusion, one on top of the other, *pêle-mêle*—and you who expected nothing are breathless, stunned."

"Bah, you are a croaker," cried the other, sharply. "I expect another kind of Everything and I will get it. I expect fame, success, all that life can give, and I mean to have it."

Juliet looked at him critically, almost disapprovingly; she liked and admired his ambition, but something in his tone jarred upon her. She glanced inquiringly at her father to ascertain if he shared her feeling, but he was wholly absorbed in contemplating the woman called Annola, in whom he seemed to take a vivid interest. The musician meanwhile had been quick to read Juliet's expression.

"You do not like what I say? You think I boast?"

"I think," she said, with a little smile, "it

would be better to let some one else say these things for you."

He looked at her quite unabashed; his grey eyes full of mischief.

"I assure you I am only stating facts. You call me conceited — many people have called me conceited before — but believe me, it is not so. I am simply telling you what I am going to do."

Juliet looked dubious, and he suddenly ceased laughing.

"You have heard me play," he said in a low voice; "do you mean to tell me I shall not succeed?"

"No, no," she hastened to reply in a tone of such conviction that he could not doubt her sincerity: "indeed, I am sure you will."

"I also am sure," he said quietly.

At this moment the door was opened by a sleepy waiter, who glanced round him in astonishment at the semi-darkened room, and then inquired in an aggrieved tone if the gracious Herrschaften intended to remain much longer; the lights were generally extinguished long before that time, but of course if the Herrschaften did wish to remain he could wait a little. A general move towards the door ensued and the two couples parted in the passage; the musician

and his companion making their way towards the back-stairs, while the Lennoxes ascended to their comfortable rooms on the first floor.

Andrews was waiting in some dudgeon for her young lady.

"If you had unpacked as many boxes as I have, Miss Juliet, you would know what it was to be ready for your bed. There's this book here, too, has been waiting and waiting for you I don't know how long. It is the visitors' book, and the head waiter made a special favour of your writing your name in it to-night — but it will be too late to bring it back to him now."

Juliet examined the book with eager curiosity. Here were the Princess' name and title duly set forth, followed by the plebeian scrawls of "Maria and Emma Krell" — those would be the two terrible old ladies — next came in a small neat man's hand, "Horace Bulkeley, Engineer."

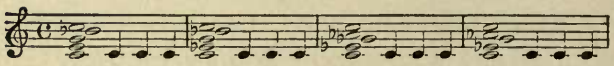
"I'm glad I know his name," said Juliet, "so that I needn't go on calling him the Ugly Man. But I want to see about the other two, and to find out what relation that odd-looking woman is to the clever boy."

But the names when she found them gave her no information on this point: they occupied the top of a blank page! First came "Annola Istó," with no indication of the status of its

owner, or whether she were married or single. Juliet, after glancing at it, suffered her eyes to pass on quickly to the line immediately below, and to linger on it. The words were written in a delicate flowing hand that had nevertheless much firmness about it, and every letter was distinctly formed.

"Christian Thal: Musician."

CHAPTER IV



NEXT morning breakfast was served on one of the little tables in the verandah. The Lennoxes took their meal alone, being less matutinal than the other inhabitants of the hotel. While Juliet was dressing she had seen the princess and her companion setting forth briskly down the hill; and now the spinsters Krell were returning from the hot springs where they had drunk a morning glass apiece. There was no sign of the gentleman who spoke like a foreigner and had an English name, or of Christian and Annola.

"Daddy, can you guess at the nationality of those people?" said Juliet, suddenly. "I mean the musician and his companion. She is called Annola Istó, and he is Christian Thal. They speak English quite well and also French, but they speak German between themselves, and I heard them talking in such a funny language last night; quite unlike anything that I have ever heard. What do you think?"

She leaned her elbows on the table and looked at him earnestly. The Professor came out of his brown study and appeared to consider the point.

"She is a woman of very decided character," he remarked somewhat irrelevantly; "an original creature too. She interests me exceedingly. Did you hear her parodied proverb, 'Tout vient à qui n'attend rien'? It took a clever woman to find out that truth, and to put it so tersely. We, who ask nothing of life, receive too much."

Juliet considered her father gravely and sympathetically, but said nothing.

"I suppose," he went on, "I suppose only one man out of a hundred would have had my ardent wish to stand apart and think and work for mankind. It was not selfishness on my part, not mere studious egotism; I felt that whereas other men were called upon to act, I was called upon to think; and that the result of my thought, when thoroughly matured and reduced to a proper system, would confer a lasting benefit on the whole human race. And what happened? The current of my life was turned aside, and for years has been flowing idly over waste places."

He paused, drumming on the table with his long shapely fingers; Juliet continued to gaze at him thoughtfully, her eyes seeming to become

ever larger and more solemn. Both were too much absorbed to notice that Mr. Horace Bulkeley had come out of the hotel and seated himself at a table a few yards away from theirs.

"When I come to think of it," continued the Professor, with a laugh that was somehow mingled with a groan, "it seems almost incredible. I can scarcely believe that I — *I* should have thus suffered myself to drift. When I ask myself what those things were that came, one after another, to block the channel of my thought, I could laugh to myself if my heart were not so sad. What were they, Juliet? The common every-day things that come to every man — and I who flattered myself that I was secure on my pedestal, that I could look upon them and touch them not! Wealth came first — vulgar sordid wealth."

"Oh, poor Moor's Hill!" exclaimed Juliet. "How can you call it such hard names?"

"My dear, I use them relatively. I mean that wealth in itself is no boon to me — rather the reverse. I was quite happy at Oxford: I had made a position for myself there. Moor's Hill is well enough — I should not be a Lennox if I did not respect and even venerate the old place; but that is just the crux. I must live up to its traditions — I must accept its respon-

sibilities. No, child, look at it in whichever way I will, I cannot think poor George's death anything but a misfortune. Well, what was I saying? First came this inheritance, and then marriage. I was obliged to marry in order to ensure an heir to the property, but I did not calculate on falling in love. I fell in love with your mother, Juliet, after I married her."

His face changed and softened.

"And then —" he broke off.

"And then I came," said Juliet, in a very small insinuating voice.

He looked at her, still with that softened expression on his face, but with the ghost of a twinkle in his eyes.

"And then you came, Baby," he said, and sighed.

"Am I not satisfactory?" inquired Juliet.

"I don't say you are unsatisfactory," returned her father, reflectively. "You are a very good little girl, as little girls go, but you see I didn't happen to want a little girl. And your coming cost me dear, Juliet."

"I know," she said thoughtfully, and without a shadow of wounded feeling. A perfect understanding existed between father and child, and she knew that the regrets in which he some-

times indulged in no way interfered with his almost passionate love for her.

Mr. Bulkeley had, since his arrival, been contemplating the pair with intense curiosity and interest, his eye resting in particular upon the massive head of the Professor. The waiter brought him his breakfast at this juncture, and he desired him in an undertone to fetch the visitors' book.

"Daddy," said Juliet, after a minute, very seriously, "there is one thing that ought to comfort you. You want to help people, and all your work and all your thought have been for that. Don't you think," speaking diffidently and pleadingly, "don't you think you will help them all the better for having felt so much yourself?"

Her father turned and looked at her, and she blushed, but continued bravely:

"As long as you were up on your pedestal you may have been able to see very far, and to think your great thoughts without being disturbed, while the poor people down below were struggling and being knocked about; but now that you have been in the crowd and have felt the blows, you know what it is like and you can sympathise even more; and when you are on your pedestal again you can call out to them,

and tell them which way to go, or how to stand firm."

He leaned forward and pinched her cheek.

"But I must first get upon my pedestal again, Baby," he said; "and that is not so easy. For seventeen years I have been trying, and I always slip back and find myself amongst the crowd."

"Ah, Daddy, but you will always be head and shoulders over it!" cried Juliet.

The Professor smiled, and held out his cup in silence for some more coffee. Presently he began to talk of other matters, but Juliet knew by the very tone of his voice that she had pleased and, in a manner, comforted him.

By-and-bye a shadow fell across their table, and looking up, somewhat startled, they saw Mr. Bulkeley standing by with a shy smile upon his face.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "Professor Lennox, forgive this intrusion, but I cannot help speaking to you."

The Professor looked up with the kindly tolerance of the notable man accustomed to be recognised.

"You will not remember me, of course," continued the other, hurriedly, "how could you? At the time you helped me you were

at the zenith of your fame, and I was a poor obscure boy, struggling at a small college — but *I* have never forgotten what you did for me. It is twenty years ago; your hair was as black as ebony then, and your figure would have been a credit to any of our athletes."

"Ah," said Mr. Lennox, with a quiet smile, "you were very clever to recognise me."

"I did not recognise you at first, beyond a dim feeling that I had met you before; but just now when I heard you speaking to your daughter it flashed upon me that it could be no one but you; and when I saw your name in the hotel book I was of course sure."

"Well, well," said the Professor, somewhat in the encouraging tone of a master towards a promising pupil, "I am very glad that we have met again. Sit down, and tell me first of all who you are, and then what I did for you."

"My name is Horace Bulkeley: it will convey nothing to you. I was sent to college to study for the Church, and I fancied myself a philosopher. I was brought up in the very strictest and narrowest Evangelicalism and fell into the other extreme at the University. I read myself out of all wish to take Orders. I became intimate with men who set to work

to undermine all my religious beliefs — in the end between the reproaches of my people, the gibes of my new friends, and my own doubts I was very nearly driven crazy. Suddenly one day after attending one of your lectures — "

"Ah," interrupted the Professor, his fine face all aglow with pride and pleasure. "I remember that course — twenty years ago you say? Yes, yes; I remember the series. It helped you, did it?"

"Not so much the lectures themselves," said Bulkeley, "as what they led to. A sentence in one came like a ray of light to me: I said to myself, 'Here is a man who will help me!' And I called upon you next day. Yes, I have wondered since at my own daring. I came, poor unfledged nobody that I was, and actually forced myself upon the great Professor Lennox whose name just then was in everybody's mouth. I would not be denied: I made my way past your servant; I clamoured for admittance at your very bedroom door. Oh, I remember it so well! You heard the noise and opened your door, and told me to come in. You were shaving, and all your cloudy hair stood back from your brow, and your eyes looked so dark and piercing in contrast with the lather on your face."

Juliet's gaze was fixed on him with deep interest: and her father, leaning back in his chair, listened with a half smile. The narrator went on, growing more and more animated as he proceeded, and gesticulating, almost as a foreigner might have done; indeed his very phraseology had a certain picturesqueness which was un-English.

"I began straightway to pour forth I know not what torrent of doubts and difficulties; I quoted, I remember, from certain German sceptics — I brought out whole pages of Voltaire, intermingled with much blasphemous nonsense of my own. In the midst of my real agony of perplexity I remember a certain glow of pride and self-satisfaction. At least, I thought, you would realise how seriously I had studied these questions and be gratified to find yourself consulted by such a well-read young fellow. You let me go on without saying a word — in fact if I remember aright you continued shaving, but I could see the reflection of those eyes of yours in the glass, and could not move my own from them. After a time your silence maddened me, I talked more wildly even than before, I launched out into yet fiercer diatribes; and all at once you put down your razor, and turned round, and laid your hand gently on

my shoulder. I can feel it now — the quiet controlling pressure. Thus might a mother stretch out her hand to steady a very little child which has been running so fast that it is in danger of falling. 'Look there, my boy,' said you, pointing with the other hand, 'what do you see over there in that corner of the room?' 'What do I see?' I stammered, after vainly staring for a moment or two, 'I see nothing but a boot.' 'Just so,' you replied very quietly, 'there is nothing but a boot there; but when I see a boot I know that it must belong to a foot. Oh, you foolish boy, to come and ask me if there be a God! (Shut up your books and use your eyes!) And after a moment you laughed and clapped me on the back, and took up your razor again. If you had argued with me for hours it would not have done me so much good as the homely illustration. And then the way you said it — your look, the tone of your voice. I went away and followed your advice; and I found many Footprints."

"You are not a clergyman now, I think," said Mr. Lennox, after a short pause, glancing at Bulkeley's clothes.

"No, no, I am an engineer. I have wandered all my life, and lately have secured a post

under Government at Stättingen. The work suits me very well, and I have grown fond of my adopted country."

Mr. Lennox sat smiling to himself for a moment or two.

"I had forgotten all about it," he said. "It is very odd; I have absolutely no recollection of the incident."

"It was the turning-point of my life," said the other. "I have always thought of you since, Professor, with what I may call veneration. I have read every word you have ever written; I have even treasured up old reports of your lectures, and paragraphs connected with your doings."

Juliet looked up at her father with shining eyes, her heart swelling with pride and triumph. What a man he was, how wonderful must be the treasures of his wisdom when even a stray crumb had had such power!

"Well," said Mr. Lennox, extending his hand with one of his peculiarly charming smiles to Horace Bulkeley, "I thank you very much for reminding me of this; you have done me good. I have been suffering from very great depression lately."

"You will forgive me," said Horace; "I could not help overhearing some of your con-

versation with your daughter, and I think I understand."

They shook hands silently and then Mr. Lennox went on:

"You knew me, Bulkeley, in my prime. You see what I am now — a broken man whose message to the world is only half spoken. That is the trouble — I had called the world, and it was listening — and now I lack the power to speak. If I die without completing my work it were better that I had never lived."

Horace was opening his lips to answer when the sound of a piano came suddenly from the open window of the reading room, close to which the party was sitting. Not the Moonlight Sonata this time, not Chopin, not even a fragment from some composer of lighter merit: the sounds which now fell upon their ear resembled rather those produced by a particularly conscientious piano tuner.

"It is young Thal practising his technique," said Horace, with a smile and a shrug. "He is studying, as you know, at Stättingen under the famous Professor Adlersohn. The Maestro, as his pupils call him, is rigorous in exacting perfection in technique."

The Professor pushed back his chair with an expression of irritation.

"Well, I shall withdraw," he said. "I admire the young man very sincerely, but one may have too much of a good thing."

"My room is beautifully quiet," put in Juliet in the soft voice and with the wistful expression which she unconsciously assumed when her father was annoyed. "I told Andrews to move your things there, and to see that the writing-table was carried in just as it was, so that nothing should be disturbed."

"A very necessary precaution," commented Mr. Lennox as he turned away.

Bulkeley was sensible of a transitory feeling of wonder that this evidence of forethought should have been rewarded by no word of commendation, no smile of recognition; but Juliet herself expected none. She and her father knew each other's ways, and in her own fashion she was the more philosophical of the two.

Bulkeley returned to his unfinished breakfast, and presently strolled away; but Juliet remained where she was, enjoying the pure crisp air and the sunshine, and letting her eyes roam over the distant hills. And Christian Thal went diligently on with his exercises, varying them occasionally by rapid runs and curious inharmonious chords.

Juliet had almost ceased to pay attention to

them and to wonder as she had done at first what particular feat of strength or flexibility the studies in question were destined to produce, when there came a sudden pause in the performance, and she was startled by the musician's voice sounding apparently close to her.

"Good morning," it said.

"Good morning," she replied, turning round, and observing that he was leaning out of the window just behind her.

They smiled at each other for a moment without speaking, and then she said shyly:

"You have been working very hard, have you not?"

"Ah, you have been listening? Yes, I am building up the scaffolding."

"I should hardly have thought it was necessary for you to go through that kind of drudgery."

His brow darkened.

"You say well: it is drudgery, and I myself think I have too much of it. As I say to Annola: 'What does one want with scaffolding when the house is built?'"

"I suppose she — your sister — will not be content with anything short of perfection for you."

He leaned out of the window a little more, smiling again.

"How rude you are to say my playing is not already perfect! But you are right: it is not by any means perfect — yet. I shall no doubt thank Annola some day, as she often tells me, but she makes me furious now. . . . She is not my sister, you know," he added, after a pause, during which he had been drumming absently on the window sill.

"Oh," said Juliet. "Then is she — what is she? I mean what relation is she to you?"

She had scarcely spoken before she repented of what she stigmatised to herself as impertinent curiosity; but he on his side did not appear to resent it at all.

"Oh, Annola is no relation," he said, idly watching the movements of his fingers; "no relation at all. We are not even of the same nationality. She is Hungarian, you see, and I — I call myself Slav: it is comprehensive, and will do, since one must say something; but my ancestry is mixed. I have Polish blood in me and Bohemian. I was born in Germany, so I suppose I am more German than anything else, but what does it matter?" — with a shrug of the shoulders — "I belong to the world."

Juliet was silent. He glanced up quickly, divining her thought.

"I have again offended your sense of decorum. A young man should not say such things, should he? He should wait until the world claims him before announcing that he belongs to the world. That is what you are thinking, is it not?"

"Not exactly," she returned; "but I don't like to hear you speak in that way, I confess." — She had caught up some of her father's tricks of speech which, coming from her, sounded quaintly pedantic — "I think you should be above it; it seems affected, and I am sure you are not that."

"There you are wrong," he replied composedly. "I am naturally affected, I was born affected — just as I was born with a good memory. I have such a memory — you cannot think what a memory I have! I never forget a face. Perhaps I shall never see you again, yet even after ten or twenty years I shall remember your face; I shall also remember this room," — with a half turn of his head towards the interior of the apartment behind him. "When here I never look at anything but the piano, yet I could tell you everything that is in it. In ten years' time I could describe it for you, beginning

with the placard over the stove which politely requests Germans not to smoke, gently prays Frenchmen to refrain from doing so, and curtly informs Englishmen that it is forbidden."

He laughed, and Juliet laughed too. He looked such a boy this morning, and his nonsense amused her so much that she felt quite at her ease with him. She almost forgot the admiration, well-nigh amounting to reverence, with which his genius had inspired her on the preceding evening, and frankly enjoyed the young bright companionship. It never struck her that she might possibly be offending against the proprieties in conversing thus freely with a comparative stranger: Professor Lennox had ever been impatient of conventionalities, and moreover treated Juliet alternately as a child, and as a person of his own age, according to the mood in which he found himself. And Juliet accepted the one situation quite meekly and calmly, and strained every nerve to reach the level of the other. As in either case the Professor deemed lessons in worldly wisdom equally unnecessary, she had never even heard of Mrs. Grundy.

Presently she returned to the subject of Annola, who alike puzzled and interested her.

"I don't quite understand about your friend," she said. "Are you always together?"

"We have been together," he returned, "for — let me see — ten years. Yes, ten years. I was ten years old when she took me away and I am twenty now."

"Then she adopted you?"

"Oh, call it that if you like. She took me to make an artist of me. You see she had failed, herself. She wanted to be a singer — she even went on the stage, and then when she was still quite young, only four- or five-and-twenty, she got a bad cold or something, and lost her voice. You may notice how hoarse she is, even in speaking."

"Poor thing," said Juliet. "How very sad!"

"Yes," agreed Christian, looking past the girl at the distant hills, but without seeing them. "I wonder she did not go mad, or kill herself. If I were to lose the use of my hands — ach!" He struck his brow and closed his eyes as though the idea were too dreadful to be contemplated.

"Well," he continued, presently resuming his narrative tone, "there, you see, was poor Annola left with all that artist soul of hers pining for expression, and no outlet. So when she came across me, and heard me play, she took me to be

her outlet. All the music that was in her she has put into me, all the dramatic instincts, all her ambition. She works only for me; she lives only for me."

Juliet was very much astonished and impressed.

"And what do your parents think about it?" she inquired. "Did they want to give you up?"

"Oh, I was an orphan when she found me; that made it easy, you see, but in any case I would have gone with her; I would have left parents, home, everything to be a musician."

"How grateful you must be to her!" commented the girl, after meditating for a moment or two.

"I owe everything in the world to her," said Christian, pensively; "she found me; she made me."

"No wonder she has such power over you," continued Juliet, pursuing her train of thought. "I thought it strange; but, of course, your gratitude to your benefactress —"

"I don't look on her in that light, you know," he interrupted, throwing back his head quickly. "If she is necessary to me I am necessary to her: she cannot do without me. She considers herself lucky to have come across me, and with reason, for you see she could not

give me everything. She helped me to develop of course; but still, from the very first I was always — *I*."

"But she — oh, I don't think you ought to speak like that!" cried Juliet, much scandalised.

"Why not? You do not understand, but she does. A burdensome gratitude is the last thing she would expect or even wish. My success will repay her for everything."

Juliet was again reduced to silence, and he resumed, after a pause: "You said she had great power over me? I suppose she has: I must own that when she reminds me of our joint object, and I call to mind the sacrifices she has made to attain it, I cannot resist her will."

"Then you are grateful after all," put in Juliet, quickly.

He continued as though he had not heard her:

"And then, you see, I am forced to admit that she knows best what is for my good. I am sometimes — how would you say it? I have fancies. I vary from day to day. People think that an artist should be like a barrel-organ, always ready to make music. But no; sometimes I cannot play a note, and sometimes people want me to play for them and they have not

got sympathetic faces — and so I can't. And sometimes I want to play for myself quite alone all day and all night; I would often play all night were it not for Annola, but she will not let me. She comes and stands by me in her peignoir and leaves me no peace until I go to bed. I think her very tiresome, but in my heart I know it is for my good."

He had begun unconsciously to finger a tune upon his sleeve, and now fell into silence, smiling at his own thoughts. Juliet did not know what to make of him. His calm egotism, his dispassionate analysis of his own moods puzzled and somewhat shocked her. She herself had been brought up in such a very different school that she could hardly understand, much less sympathise with, a condition of mind in which moods and impulses appeared to hold so important a part. Ever since she had been a very little child she had been taught to conquer all unreasonable inclinations and to be superior to unwarrantable impulses. She remembered yet her first lesson in philosophy. Some friend had promised to take her to a pantomime when she was yet so tiny that she firmly believed that the fairies would be real. Almost at the last moment a heavy snowstorm came on and her father decided that the expected pleasure must

be renounced. He took her on his knee and explained very gently the various risks and dangers which would attend the carrying out of the project in such weather, and finished by saying decidedly:

"So you see, my little girl, it is better to put it off for another day."

"Yes, Daddy," answered the child, and suddenly burst into tears. How well she remembered it even now! The Professor gazed at her seriously, and reasoned with her very kindly but firmly. It was silly of her to cry for a thing that could not be helped. Did she want to catch a very bad cold and be ill perhaps for weeks? No, Juliet certainly did not want that. Did she know the snow might come down so thickly that no horse could get along in the streets? That would be very dreadful, Juliet sobbed. Had she ever known her father to break a promise unless he was absolutely obliged to do so? Never, never! Why then did she cry? She thought of the fairies again, but choked back her sobs in silence. He went on talking to her, and she listened with all her might, and tried her very best to understand; and said "Yes, Daddy" by-and-bye when he asked her if she were quite satisfied. But she did not recover her spirits until she went up-

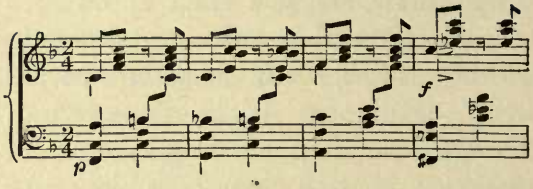
stairs to Andrews, who said: "Well, to be sure!" in a vexed tone on hearing of the Professor's decision and promised her to play forfeits after tea. Then Juliet felt that the world was not all dark. Nevertheless, when the next disappointment came — and how many such disappointments fall to the lot of a particularly precious child, when the words "another day" are supposed by their adoring and too anxious-minded elders to be a panacea for all woe — Juliet bore it like a little stoic. She said:

"Very well, Daddy," and walked away, and looked out of the window for a moment. When she turned back again into the room she saw that her father was watching her, and immediately made some small remark about the weather; whereupon the Professor caught her in his arms and kissed her repeatedly. She understood *that*, and many a subsequent victory was won, and many a wayward impulse subdued chiefly with the desire to please her father. However, from whatever motive the training was equally effective; "sweet reasonableness" governed the girl's actions and in a manner dominated her very thoughts. She found Christian's behaviour the more unaccountable. He seemed to have an instinctive knowledge of

her disapproving attitude, and looked up presently with a smiling glance.

"What would you have?" he said. "I am made like that. But if you will come in I will play to you now, and you shall approve of me again." She jumped up quickly, and soon joined him in the reading room where he was already seated at the piano. Again it seemed to her that from the moment his fingers touched the keys a transformation came over him. All his affectations fell from him like a garment. He seemed to rise above them, to become ennobled and in a manner spiritualised. It was no mere whimsical yet fascinating youth who sat before her dominating his instrument: it was a great artist, a great man.

CHAPTER V



THE interminable table d'hôte dinner was somewhat enlivened by the addition of Mr. Bulkeley to the Lennoxes' table, at the request of the Professor. They talked together, of old times and new, in a manner which Juliet found delightful to listen to. Presently Mr. Lennox, wishing to refer to his note-book, discovered that he had left his pince-nez upstairs, and immediately despatched Juliet in search of it.

Horace watched her as she rose with alacrity and threaded her way deftly through the rows of tables which ran the length of the room, vanishing presently through the door.

"What are you looking at?" inquired the Professor, observing that Bulkeley had turned in his chair.

"I was looking at your daughter," he returned, wheeling round again. "I was thinking that

I had never seen a girl of her age so absolutely free from awkwardness or self-consciousness. Yet it must have been rather an ordeal to pass so many people by herself."

"Juliet has never been accustomed to think of anything of the kind," said her father, composedly. "She is, thank Heaven, simplicity itself."

"She is a singularly interesting and graceful creature," resumed the other. "Peculiarly graceful; every movement is full of charm."

"Ah, yes," conceded Mr. Lennox. "Yes, she is naturally graceful. If you were to see her dance you would be quite struck. She has a perfect genius for dancing. It is in fact the only thing for which she has a genius. Her dancing is not merely graceful, but full of poetry — one might almost say inspiration. Last year she had a great wish to learn some curious, fanciful figures from a little American girl who came to London for a time, and who had the pretty idea of indicating certain phases of nature by means of dancing and gestures. One little exercise, for instance, simulates the growth and movement of a flower, another the flight of a bird, a third the swaying of trees in the wind. The movements are very pretty and suggestive, and Juliet has caught up the notion very well."

"I should like to see these dances," cried Bulkeley, to whom the idea appealed, and who now watched Juliet with increased curiosity as she re-entered the room.

"Nothing easier," returned the Professor. "She shall give a little exhibition this afternoon. Mr. Bulkeley would like to see your flower dances, dear," he remarked when she drew near. "You remember them, do you not? though I dare say you are out of practice."

"Oh, I think I could manage them," said Juliet, without hesitation. "But it won't go so well without music."

"I dare say that young fellow yonder would play," said the Professor, calmly. "He would be willing possibly to spare a few moments from his abominable finger exercises."

Juliet coloured.

"He — he mightn't like —" she began, but the Professor interrupted her.

"Nonsense, child. I will ask him myself; I am quite sure he will make no objection."

Juliet demurred no longer, and finished her dinner composedly enough. Herr Thal was not likely to object, she thought, in fact it was a very simple thing to ask. She had not danced for some time, and had almost fancied she was growing too old for it, but since her father ap-

parently did not think so it must be all right. And anyhow she loved dancing. After dinner the Professor himself went up to Christian, and made his request in his own courteous, dignified fashion. The young man had risen at his approach, and acceded with a bow and smile; subsequently casting a look of surprised interest at the girl, who had remained standing beside Bulkeley in the doorway.

Leaving the table, where Annola sat looking straight before her as though without noticing what was going on, Christian accompanied Mr. Lennox and the rest of the party to the reading room, the Professor pausing on the way to speak to the head waiter.

"I have made sure that we shall not be disturbed," he remarked as he rejoined the others. "I don't want any strangers to break in upon us. The child would naturally be disconcerted. It is a different matter just dancing for a friend like you, Bulkeley."

Juliet glanced quickly at Christian, but her father considered him no more than if he had been indeed the barrel-organ to which, as he had recently complained, so many people appeared to liken him.

"What is it to be — a waltz?" he inquired, as he seated himself at the piano.

"It need not be a waltz — something slow, and with a marked rhythm would do. I will dance a little, and you will see."

She threw out her arms, slender, immature, childish arms, but infinitely graceful in form and movement, pointed a taper little foot, and began to glide about the room, glancing back over her shoulder at the musician, who watched her gravely, his hands upon the keys.

"You see?" she said, without pausing. Her eyes were dilated till they seemed almost black, but their gaze remained frankly interested; she tossed up her arms again, the loose sleeves of her white dress falling back from them and revealing all their slim youthfulness; the little foot was poised ready for the spring that would carry her a yard or two away.

"I see," said Christian, and he began to play softly a Mélodie of Rubinstein's that adapted itself admirably to the swing and rhythm of the dance.

The Professor nodded approval, and followed his daughter's movements with æsthetic pleasure.

"Why is your hair not down?" he inquired presently, however, with a little frown. "It should be loose and flowing; it should float round you when you are playing with the

wind. The illusion is not complete as it is. You have forgotten, Juliet; you always used to have your hair about your shoulders."

"That was because I wore it loose, then," said Juliet, pausing. "It was last year; I had not begun to tie it back. Don't you think I am too big to have it loose now?"

Her very seriousness made her seem more of a child than ever, and her father scouted the notion.

"Let it down, dear," he said. "You are not so big as all that, and it looks ever so much prettier."

With a laugh she obeyed, untying the ribbon which fastened the thick tress and shaking out her shining hair till it floated round her like a veil. It was very fine and light and silky, and glittered in the sunshine like gold.

Her father leaned back with a sigh of artistic contentment, and Juliet continued to play ball with the wind, and to swoop and hover, as it seemed, like a swallow, and to advance with the rising tide, and to rock on swaying forest boughs. Every now and then she would explain the meaning of this or that phase of the performance, and Bulkeley would nod in token of his appreciation of the exactness of her rendering. But in reality he cared little for

the meaning of the representation; he was absorbed in watching the girl herself. The slender, willowy figure, the supple limbs, the beautiful attitudes and movements, above all the face, with its rapt look — a look in which pure joy of life and action was combined with something which might almost have been called inspiration — it was an unforgettable face.

"To me," observed the Professor, chiming in suddenly with his thoughts, "to me the great charm of the performance is the child's own enjoyment. She dances with something of the ease and delight with which a bird sings; and with the same simplicity. If I were to detect the least sign of self-consciousness I should make an end of this at once; but as you see, there is none."

Bulkeley murmured his assent, darting the while a sidelong look at his friend and revered teacher. The autocratic tone, breaking in as it did on his own secret enthusiasm, jarred on him. Did this great man appreciate his treasure as she deserved to be appreciated?

Christian Thal, meanwhile, played on, varying his theme occasionally and adapting it almost as by intuition to Juliet's movements, some of which were unexpected and almost freakish.

He made no remark during her occasional pauses; and she herself, tingling with delightful excitement, almost forgot his existence.

When at last she dropped down, laughing and breathless, on the sofa beside her father, he turned in his chair and said quietly:

"I have never seen dancing like that."

"You must rest, my pet," said Mr. Lennox, taking her hand. "How this little pulse is jumping; and you are quite pale!"

"Oh, I am always pale when I dance, because I am so happy, I think," cried she. "I shall go on presently; I am not a bit tired — only out of breath."

"No, no; we have had enough for to-day. Mr. Bulkeley has seen as much as he wants, and I cannot let you be overtired. I am very much obliged to you," he added, rising, and turning to Christian; "your music was admirable, and added greatly to our enjoyment. Come, Juliet, you must rest a little upstairs before going out."

He drew her hand through his arm and led her towards the door. Christian bowed as they passed, and then turned to Horace.

Their eyes met, and the elder man passed on.

Annola, entering a moment or two later, found Christian standing as though in a brown

study, with his eyes fixed on the ground. He did not observe her until she was close to him; and turned towards her with a start of surprise.

"Well," she said, with a sardonic smile, "you advance, mein lieber; you have reason to be proud. You have got so far in your career that your music is considered good enough for Miss to dance to. I congratulate you."

"Do not be foolish, Annola," he cried, flushing. "You are talking nonsense. You know quite well I could not refuse a request that was so civilly made. Dear God! what could have been more simple?"

"I now dream of a future for you," she went on in the same mocking tone, "such a future as I never dared to hope for. Who knows? You may yet attain to the dignity of playing in a band—two violins and a 'cello, and Mr. Christian Thal hammering out waltzes and polkas on the piano. With this gentleman's recommendations you could, I dare say, count on being patronised by London society. Ja wohl! You might even have the good misfortune to replace from time to time a Hungarian band."

"Now, Annola, you are trying to make me angry, and for what reason? Ach! it is not difficult to make me lose patience, as you know

well; I am etwas spitzig. But what is it all about? — that is what I want to know."

"What is it about?" cried she, and the eyes under her heavy brows seemed to flash fire. "Christian Thal, do you think it is for this I have toiled and thought and starved all these years? That you should turn into a mere complacent puppet ready to bow to the first who pulls the string! If you have no pride and self-respect as a man, have you not at least the dignity of the artist to uphold? It is unworthy of your vocation that you should be at the beck of every stranger."

"How you go on," returned he, vexed. "As if it were not the most trivial thing in the world! The greatest artist living would have consented."

"Well, in your place I should have sent them about their business," retorted she, violently. "They would not have dared to ask a great artist; but they asked you because they thought you of no account. You and the head waiter alike conduced to the convenience of the performance. You by assisting as a machine might have assisted, he by keeping other people away. Do you think I do not know how little they considered you? Was I not there, outside the window, watching and listen-

ing? Oh, I raged. Did anyone so much as look towards you, once they had made sure of your help? They noticed you no more than if you had been a servant; they thanked you at the end as they would have thanked a servant. I tell you, I felt all the blood in my body rush to my face when I heard the insulting words. 'Thank you; we have had enough for to-day!' And you — you did not resent them; you scarcely seemed to notice them; you stood there smiling — I could have struck you!"

Christian had turned red and pale by turns; but now he suddenly laughed, and threw out a long forefinger, shaking it in warning.

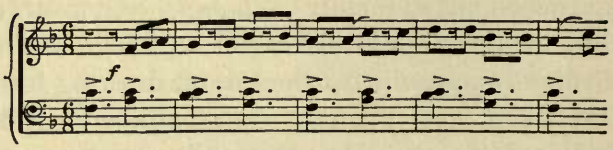
"Annola," he said, "you are in a passion. Take care — because I shall very likely get into a passion myself, and you know it is not amusing when we both lose our tempers together. Besides, you are saying too much. One or two arrows might have struck home, but when you throw a whole sheaf at once it does not carry so far. Now, go away. I'm going to practise."

He laughed quite good-humouredly as he sat down to the piano. Annola stood by, still at a white heat, and continuing to gibe at him. He made no answer in words, but taunted her back through the medium of the instrument

with grotesque effect. Thus when she hurled denunciations at his head, he struck a series of melodramatic chords; when she laughed scornfully, he echoed it with pattering treble notes; and when she suddenly exchanged her wrathful tone for one of almost tearful reproach, he immediately passed into the minor, drawing forth a series of such plaintive and pathetic sounds, and looking up at her the while with so much mischief in his eyes, that at last she fairly stamped upon the ground and rushed from the room. Christian let his hands fall from the keys, looked after her, sighed, shrugged his shoulders, and finally played Rubinstein's Mélodie in lingering, caressing pianissimo. Then he stood up and looked frowningly at the keys.

"Annola is right in one thing," he said. "They cared no more for me than if I were a machine. But we shall see. We can soon put this to rights."

CHAPTER VI



THE next morning while Christian was dutifully practising his technique under the guardianship of Fräulein Istó, who was walking up and down with the measured tread of a sentinel, he chanced to look up suddenly and saw her pause before one of the windows, a kind of spasm momentarily convulsing her face.

"What is it?" he queried quickly.

"Nothing!" she said, and walked on.

He stopped playing and listened: a blithe laugh broke upon his ear.

"Aha!" commented he, and went on with his exercise.

By-and-bye, however, he paused again.

"Annola, why do you hate that girl?"

"*I* hate her? What are you talking about? What do I know of her, that I should hate her?"

"It is just what I ask you."

"She is not worth my hating," resumed An-

nola, hastening her steps; a scarlet spot blazed in each sallow cheek.

"Nevertheless," persisted Christian, "I am right."

"Well, if I do hate her," she said, turning on him vehemently, "what is it to you? What can a boy like you understand of a woman's jealousy?"

"Oh ho!" he exclaimed, wheeling round so as to look at her more directly. "Jealousy, Annola! What does that mean?"

"You can know nothing of it, I say," she cried. "You cannot even guess at the torture of it. What am I? A woman not yet past her prime, a woman with more life and energy in her little finger than that doll possesses in her whole frame. Yet to her, and such as her, are given the prizes of life! Women like me wear themselves out in striving and doing; *things*" — with indescribable scorn — "*things* of her kind wrap themselves in cotton wool, and are cherished and petted and cossetted — and crowned! Gott! what fools we are — all of us!"

"Annola!" exclaimed the musician, amazed at the outburst.

"There, pay no attention to me," she returned, dropping her voice suddenly and trying to laugh. "I am the greatest fool of all — I

am giving you proof of it, am I not? But, do you see, Christian, it is not so long ago since I, too, was young like that, and happy. I, too, had a father who idolised me — ach, and now! Dear Heaven, he has changed since then! I was as pretty as she is — "

"No, no," interrupted Christian, decidedly, "that you can never have been. Spirituelle, yes — clever, interesting, intelligent, anything you like. Maîtresse femme always. But pretty? No, my dear Annola; never that."

"Ah," cried she in a choked voice, "*you* say that to me, Christian! *You!*"

"But certainly," he replied with merciless calm. "Come, Annola, be reasonable. What takes you to-day? Did I ever think you pretty?"

"No, that is true," she said in a low tone. She took another turn or two about the room and again paused opposite him. "You say well," she went on, "you never had a generous illusion about me; never a spark of enthusiasm. You take all — my work, my talent, my hopes, my prayers, my very life — have I any existence apart from yours? And you give me nothing!"

Christian rose to his feet, and, coming up to her, placed a hand on either of her shoulders

and looked into her face. His own was astir with a variety of emotions: anger was there, and surprise, and wounded feeling, and underlying all a kind of compassionate tenderness.

"I will give you everything back one day," he said with forced gentleness. "I will pay you a hundredfold. Come, have we not often talked of it? I thought all this was understood between us. It is true you do much for me — I am not likely to forget it — but are we not one, after all? Have we not a single intention, a single aim? Be patient, Annola."

He bent forward as though to kiss her cheek, but she pushed him away violently, and turned from him.

"Oh, very well," he said, now thoroughly vexed; "just as you like, my dear. I regret that I cannot please you better, but if it is necessary to pay you compliments in order to earn your good graces I am afraid I must remain out of favour. Compliments between you and me, Annola! Think of it, then!" — becoming good-humoured all at once, and laughing boyishly. "I should as soon think of telling you you were pretty, as of telling you that your skin was as white as Miss Lennox's and your hair as fair!"

"Christian!" she cried, almost hissing the

word, "I forbid you — I forbid you to name that girl to me. You are right! I *hate* her!"

"Behüte!" said Christian, opening his great eyes very wide, and staggering back in affected alarm. "We have a tragedy queen here, it seems. *Pom, pom, pom, pom, pom!* Now the drums should strike up. *Brrrrr!*"

Annola threw out her arms: "Ah, you mock me like that! You mock me, you, ungrateful that you are! You deride my most sacred sorrow, you turn even the cruel disappointment to which you owe your own good fortune into a weapon against me! That only was wanting!"

"Annola! Annola!" he cried, turning pale in his turn, and sobered in an instant, "surely you cannot think I meant to taunt you with your misfortune?"

"I know it," she returned violently. "You meant to ridicule the dream of my life; the dream for which I gave up everything: my home, my parents, my rank. Oh, it is well said, 'Noblesse oblige'! You have this day proved yourself to be what you are — *canaille!*"

"Call me what you like," he said breathlessly, though the colour rushed back to his face as if she had struck him, "but believe me, believe me, Annola! I had no intention in what I said — it was the merest childishness!"

Again he would have gone to her, but she pushed him vehemently on one side, and was gone before he had recovered his equilibrium.

"To the devil with women!" he cried. "Pfui! She has a temper, Annola. And all because I said she was not pretty. She is *not* pretty — she is *not!* And when she is in a temper she is frightful. Yes, frightful. My good Annola, I detest you to-day — positively I do. You are ugly, ugly. Your skin is dark and your hair is coarse and rusty. There!"

Having in a measure relieved his feelings, he returned to the piano, but found that his hands were trembling.

"There!" he cried vengefully, "she talks so much of helping me — and this is what she does! She makes me a scene so that I cannot play a note. I will go for a walk. It is *your* fault, stupid Annola, that I shall lose an entire morning."

He went out moodily into the brilliant sunshine, and presently was swallowed up by the woods. Once in their midst his ill-humour vanished as though by magic, and indeed there was enchantment in the place. Autumn was advancing by scarcely perceptible degrees, each of which, it would seem, added to her glory. The air was still warm as in June, and yet had a

savour, a sparkle not to be found amid summer languors; the foliage had assumed every variety of exquisite tint, a whole gamut of colour, from palest primrose to deepest chocolate brown; there were strong notes of orange and amber and rose to accentuate the cadence of this silent forest music, and there was still an undertone of green, holding its own like the pedal of an organ, and adding depth, and richness, and solemnity to the whole.

Some such fanciful thoughts flitted through Christian's mind as he strode along under the lightly swaying boughs, and let his keen inquiring eyes pierce the mystery of the glades. Beech-mast and acorns crackled under his feet, a finch flew now and then across the track with a flash of jewelled wings, a squirrel leaped from branch to branch overhead, and he paused a moment to watch it, and to mark the mixture of speed and grace and strength in every movement.

At a little distance a bluish haze was floating up between the shining beech stems, and on coming nearer he saw two old men at work near a small wood fire. Their figures were very old and bent, and they wore blue smocks, and went about their work with great deliberation. They were repairing one of the rustic benches with which the kindly authori-

ties have amply provided these woods, and were using for the purpose the limbs of a sturdy young fir tree; the fire was probably intended for melting their glue. Be that as it might, it looked pretty and poetical, glowing there amid the green, and sending its wavering column of smoke up amid those nobler, sturdier pillars of beech and pine.

Christian strolled idly towards them.

"You work hard, good fathers," said he with light irony, as he watched their dawdling movements.

"Ach, yes, gnädiger Herr," returned one old fellow in entire good faith. "Yes, it is hard work, but men must live."

"You are mending the bench, I see," said Christian. "So! it is fine. How long will it take you?"

The old man looked at his companion.

"Two days, perhaps," he said tentatively.

The other nodded.

Two days. And when that was done would they repair another bench?

"Yes, to be sure, there were plenty more that wanted mending, as the gnädiger Herr could see for himself if he chose to look about him."

"And when they are all mended," inquired Christian, seriously, "what will you do then?"

"Then, gnädiger Herr, we shall begin to paint them."

"And when they are all painted?" persisted the youth, turning his limpid eyes guilelessly upon them. The old man scratched his head, and looked at his comrade, who looked frowningly back.

"Ach," said the first, with a toothless deprecating smile, "only the lieber Gott can know what will happen then. Probably some of the benches will be damaged again."

"First mending benches, and then painting benches, and then mending them afresh," commented Christian to himself as he nodded and turned away, striking out for a little path that wound round the side of the hill. "That is a life!"

He walked more briskly now, unconsciously rejoicing in his own vigorous youth. Up and up, pausing from time to time to look about him. A few newly fallen leaves lay scattered like golden sprigs on the ruddy carpet of bygone days; every now and then the presence of a clump of firs announced itself by a rush of aromatic scent, and here and there through the tall colonnades he caught sight of stretches of undergrowth still vividly green. Often, as he climbed upwards, his eyes passed idly over one

of the various placards by means of which the almost too thoughtful guardians of the woods had forestalled the possibility of any hapless wayfarer losing himself, or even becoming over-fatigued. Little arrows indicated the direction of this or that point of interest with irritating frequency, and were supplemented by an exact calculation of the number of minutes it would take to reach the spot in question. The wayfarer likewise received polite but firm instructions as to the paths in which he was permitted to walk, and the other paths in which he was by no means to ride; he was also threatened with the divers pains and penalties attached to certain acts of rashness, such as dropping lighted matches, or throwing sticks and stones into the gaily tinkling little springs. He was further informed, with tender solicitude, of the whereabouts of the different places of entertainment where he could refresh his inner man, and was altogether taken such prodigious care of, and encompassed about with so many warnings and counsels, that he might very well have felt occasionally bewildered.

Christian, as has been said, had gone on his way without paying much heed to these friendly admonitions, but suddenly his attention was attracted by the fact that three of these notices

successively announced that the path he was pursuing led to the Adlerskopf.

"Do I want to go to the Adlerskopf?" inquired Christian, coming to a standstill and looking about him. "Why not? They say the view is fine from there."

He went on more rapidly, and looking about him with even keener interest. The road broadened suddenly, opening out to a sort of plateau which was studded by gigantic oaks and fenced off at the further end, whence it descended precipitously, by a barrier of rough-hewn logs. Benches and little tables were set here and there beneath the trees, and a kind of rustic shelter, also provided with seats, afforded doubtless such accommodation as the good townsfolk loved when they toiled to the place in summer, laden with baskets of provisions.

But the spot was deserted now, and Christian was going forward to the fence, whence a beautiful view was obtainable over a lengthened vista of wooded hills, when he observed that the bench immediately in front of it was occupied by an imposing-looking female who seemed to regard it as her own particular property. An open umbrella was securely tied to one end, in the shade of which she had ensconced herself; her feet were comfortably propped up on a heap

of stones, and a large, open work-basket lay on the seat beside her. She glanced up severely as Christian approached, and then went on with her stitching, flourishing her needle with a somewhat aggressive air.

He moved away, smiling to himself; and, skirting the shelter and leaving the path proper, struck out a track for himself, across the crisp rustling leaves. By-and-bye their crackling ceased, and his foot fell noiselessly on springy emerald moss. On his left a plantation of firs shut out the view of the wooden arbour and the benches, and the severe female with the work-basket. He gave a little cry of glee: now the woods were all his own — he would penetrate to the heart of them.

But even as he uttered this exclamation he discovered that he was not alone; there, a few paces away from him, reclining on the soft moss between the spreading roots of a large beech was Juliet Lennox. She had taken off her hat, and was lying with her clasped hands beneath her head, looking up through the shifting branches into the heights above. As Christian advanced she sat up, blushing a little, and greeted him with a smile.

"Are you here all alone?" said he, dropping down beside her.

"Not exactly alone. My maid is over there, sitting on one of the benches. I could not induce her to come here. She said she was too old to sit upon the ground, and she could not get on with her work. Poor Andrews! She thinks the day is lost if she does not do a certain amount of stitching, and I believe at this moment her heart is sore within her because she could not carry out her sewing-machine."

"She ought to like working in such a pretty spot," remarked the young man. "There is a lovely view from the Kopf. You liked to come here better — to be by yourself?" he added interrogatively.

"Yes, I came away because I wanted to try and forget I was so near the beaten track. Don't you know what it is to want to get away from things and people — especially people? The mere sight of these placards, and the dear old oaks fenced round with stones, and the benches, and the tables, and the summer-house, all remind me so painfully of my kind. Don't be shocked at me," she added, bending forward with mock earnestness, "but do you know, I can't bear my fellow-creatures?"

"That is very discouraging to the particular fellow-creature who happens to be beside you."

"Oh, I don't mean in that way," she cried hastily, fearing that she had been unintentionally rude. "I am speaking of them *en bloc*. All the preparations for their entertainment over there conjure up the vision of crowds — and I hate crowds, don't you?"

"No," returned Christian, thoughtfully, "I rather like them, because I never find myself in the midst of one without feeling that I have the power to dominate it. 'Some day,' I say to myself, 'I will rule over you or such as you: I will be your master.' I think of a great hall packed — right up to the roof; all the faces turned in one direction, all the eyes bent on one man, swayed by him, responding to every emotion he chooses to call forth — and I say to myself, 'I will be that man.'"

"There you and I differ," said Juliet. "I should like of course to have such a power, but I think I should almost feel it a kind of desecration to give my best to the multitude. I should want to keep it for just a few. I imagine," she went on, laughing, "that what I should like best of all would be to make my music all alone, out in the woods perhaps. Only Nature about me, and the notes going out in the solitude to complete the beauty and the grandeur. Did you ever hear of that little fable

of Stevenson's?—our Stevenson, you know, our great writer—about the stranger who comes to an unknown land where he first wanders through a forest and falls in love with the trees, and afterwards is taken to a large city where everyone is bent on business or pleasure. 'These are very stupid people,' he says; 'I like best the people with the green heads.' Well—I like the people with the green heads best, too."

"It would be a little difficult to carry a grand piano out into the woods, though," remarked Christian; "almost more difficult than to provide your maid with a sewing-machine yonder. You are most fortunate; for your art is complete in itself, and you may enjoy it anywhere."

"My art?" repeated Juliet in surprise. "I was not aware I had one."

"When one can dance like you, is it not an art?" said he. "I think it is. And on that point I have a complaint to make."

"A complaint?"

"Yes, I feel myself aggrieved. I did my best to please you yesterday, and you did not give me a single word of thanks."

"Didn't I? I am so sorry. But surely my father—"

"Mr. Lennox indeed was good enough to thank me in the same manner that one thanks the waiter who fills one's glass. 'Thanks, that is enough!' Yes, I will own it — I felt distinctly slighted."

"I am very sorry," said Juliet, really perturbed, for beneath his light vein she detected a certain element of seriousness; "I assure you he — I — we both were most grateful to you."

"I did my best," he continued, as though he had not heard her; "I endeavoured to be sympathetic and sustaining. I subordinated myself to you, which was the more noble of me because my anxiety to be in harmony with you and to do you full justice, preoccupied me so much that I was deprived of the pleasure I should otherwise have had in watching you. — No, it was not fair!"

"What more can I do?" cried Juliet, half laughing, half distressed. "I have told you how grateful my father and I are to you, and how — how unintentional was any slight on our part. I thank you again most heartily, and I apologise. Are you not satisfied?"

"Not yet," he said. "You must make full amends by dancing for me now. Oh, you must not refuse! Why should you not dance for me

as well as for Mr. Bulkeley? Dance for me and the people with the green heads."

"There is no music," she said, hesitating.

"No, there is not — but we can imagine the music; and everything else is perfect. This springy moss makes a most delicious floor, and the forest people are sympathetic and appreciative. Think of your own words just now, and give us of your best. One moment, if you please," he added gravely as, tossing aside her wide-brimmed hat, she stepped out into the midst of a little piece of level ground, free of roots, and thickly carpeted with moss. "The hair must come down."

"I don't think that is necessary," cried she, hastily, and a little vexed.

"Pardon me: the trees and I will not be content with less than Mr. Bulkeley. The hair was loosened for him — we claim our rights."

She pulled off the ribbon quickly and shook her hair about her.

"Remember," he called out as she prepared to begin, "remember you have for audience Nature in her most sympathetic mood; you yourself are just a part of the harmony of the woods."

Whether the words inspired her, or whether the beauty of the spot and the sparkling fragrant

air intoxicated her, certain it is that Juliet never danced as she danced that sunny morning. Her hair flew out about her transfigured little face, her feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground; the swaying supple figure exhibited ever more and more grace; each movement, each attitude was more exquisite than the preceding one.

Christian smiled now and then as she turned towards him, and was unable to repress an occasional murmur of admiration; but she did not heed him; indeed in a few moments she absolutely forgot his presence. He watched her at first with a suspicion of distrust, for the thought flashed across him that this assumption of indifference might possibly be feigned; close observation would probably reveal some touch of coquetry or at least of consciousness. But the indication for which he looked, perhaps hoped, was not forthcoming. He himself was not more absorbed in the expression of his own peculiar gift than was Juliet in hers. So he gave up analysis and abandoned himself to entire enjoyment.

In after years the scene often recurred to him; the magic circle of glowing moss, the fronds tipped as it were with fire where the sunlight came slanting down athwart the leafy canopy, a canopy all spangled with amber and

gold; the little army of fir trees, each sending forth its own incense to greet the woodland queen; the tall slender grasses that here and there encroached upon the moss, catching the sunlight on their fawn-coloured crests so that these were turned to flame. Stretching all about them, falling away from the plateau which they had made their own and mounting again and rolling away to meet the sky-line, the glowing floor of the forest, all as it seemed of burnished copper. And the silence! The flutter of a falling leaf could be heard as it slipped from branch to branch; but for this occasional slight sound, and the faint rustling of Juliet's draperies, the woods were absolutely still. This stillness adds to the effect of unreality of glamour, and Christian almost found himself wondering whether the ethereal floating figure before him were not after all a vision, whether the witchery to which he felt himself succumbing were not the witchery of a dream.

But she stopped all at once, and came towards him, a little shy for the first time, but laughing.

"Did you understand it all?" she asked.

He shook his head, smiling:

"Not all."

Her face fell.

"Ah," she said, "of course you could not

understand. I was trying to work out some new ideas — to put in some of the things I had seen here this morning. But I could not expect you to guess at them. Yet one or two were easy. Did you not recognise the squirrel?"

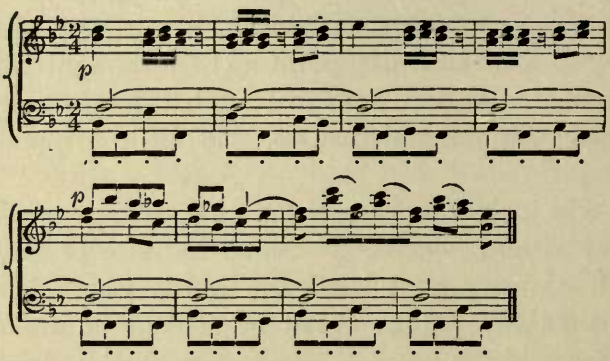
"The squirrel?" echoed he.

"Yes. How disappointing! I thought you would have been sure to see what I meant by those flights and pauses, and little tripping steps."

He looked at her, with a curious expression, but without speaking. Some impulse of boyish chivalry kept back the words which had rushed to his lips. Had he spoken he would have said too much. She had meanwhile been tying up her hair, and now put out her hand for her hat, which he presented to her gravely. By the time she had put it on, and again turned a radiant rosy face towards him, he had found his tongue and his self-possession.

"I thank you," he said, "in the name of the forest folk. I am more than rewarded — my injuries are forgotten."

CHAPTER VII



ANNOLA ISTÓ was standing bare-headed at the entrance to the woods, screening her eyes with her hand and anxiously scanning the divers paths, when Juliet and Christian came in view. They were walking very contentedly side by side, while Andrews and the work-basket brought up the rear. At sight of them her hand dropped by her side, and she hurried forward to meet them.

Contrary to Christian's expectations she greeted them with a smile, and bowed graciously to Juliet.

"You have been for a walk," she said. "You

did well to profit by this lovely morning. I have not yet explored the woods; you must take me with you next time."

"They are worth exploring, indeed," returned Juliet, adding eagerly: "It would be very nice to take a walk together sometimes. My father is so busy I cannot persuade him to come out, and my maid cannot walk far."

"But certainly, it would be delightful," said Annola, gaily. "We must talk of that."

And nodding brightly at the girl, and passing her arm through Christian's she led him into the house. As they went she chatted pleasantly about indifferent things without appearing to notice that his face was set, and that the arm on which she leaned was rigid as marble. The fact was that the sight of her had recalled her injustice of the morning, and above all the taunt which she had flung at him. "Canaille!" The word stuck in his throat, and moreover the contrast between that disagreeable scene and the idyll in which he had recently taken part was so strong that he well-nigh turned from his companion with disgust. Why should she force herself upon him now? Why should she remind him by her presence of what sweeter scenes had momentarily effaced?

They crossed the hall and mounted the stairs, Annola still talking, and her companion steeling himself against her. At last they reached the topmost story, interrupting sundry love passages on the landing between a scullion in his white cap and a red-armed house-maid, and almost knocking over a little waiter who was descending from his attic resplendent in his greasy tail-coat. Christian's arm had dropped, but Annola still clung to it.

"Not here," she said, as he would have halted at his own door. "Come into my room for a moment."

He suffered her to draw him into the adjoining chamber — such a poor little room with a bare boarded floor and curtainless windows — and there stood facing her, frowning, and looking very handsome and rebellious. He expected more reproaches and recriminations, and was surprised at the gentleness with which she asked:

"Where have you been, Christian?"

"First I took a walk," he answered defiantly. "After the scene you made me my hands shook so that it was useless to attempt to play; therefore I went out walking, and I met Miss Lennox, and while talking to her I suddenly remembered your kind remarks the

other day as to the value she and her father put upon my services. I remembered also other accusations you were good enough to make, and I thought I would see for myself how much truth there was in this one. I asked Miss Lennox if she would prove her appreciation of my help by dancing again for *me* — for myself alone. And she did it with all the good-will in the world. You see, Annola, she was not too proud to despise this *canaille!* Her mind is not distorted and suspicious like some people's, thank Heaven."

He flung out the taunt, partly out of sheer boyish bravado, partly to reinstate himself in his own good opinion and hers, for his heart was sore within him at the memory of her bitter words. He would prove to her that though she had unjustly scorned him, this girl of whom she had avowed herself jealous knew how to appreciate him.

But he was not prepared for the effect of his announcement: Annola suddenly covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

"Oh," he groaned, and threw himself into a chair with an absurd assumption of the tone of a blasé man of the world. "Oh, these women! First recriminations, then tears." But his better nature soon asserted itself, and, rising,

he came towards her, clasping her wrists and speaking very gently.

"Annola, Annola, this is not like you! I have never seen you cry before."

She did not pull away her hands as he half expected, but, continuing to bury her face in them, sank upon her knees.

"Oh, Christian," she sobbed, "Christian, forgive me! I was wrong — do not punish me by taking away your love."

His heart was touched; he bent over her, throwing his arm about her, and trying to see her face.

"Why, Annola, what nonsense! As if I should ever stop being fond of you! What are you thinking of? We have only had such a quarrel as we have had hundreds of times before without either of us being a bit the worse."

"Ah, but I was wrong," moaned she. "I said so many wicked things — things that were not true. None of them were true, mein lieber — not one. I think I was mad. I have no dislike at all to that pretty Miss Lennox; and as for you — you know, Christian, you are all my world."

"Why, of course I do," cried he. "Think no more of it. I told untruths too."

Here he pulled down her hands and gently lifted her face. Her eyes seemed almost unnaturally large and were bright with tears; there was a little colour in her cheeks, and her lips, still quivering, looked soft and full.

"I swear you are a very pretty woman," he said affectionately. "I lied this morning. When you look at me like that, Annola, you are beautiful."

She laughed a little sadly, and rose, pushing back her heavy hair from her brow.

"No, Christian, you spoke the truth," she said. "But perhaps you were a little hard. They say a mother is always beautiful to her child. Was it not natural that I, who look on you as a son, should wish you to have something of the same feeling for me?"

"Now do not be absurd," said Christian, bluntly. "You and I are not in the least like mother and son, and never could be." He paused, startled by the sudden flash which had come into her eyes, but continued, after a moment, gaily: "We are just a pair of comrades; good sturdy comrades working together for the same end; the best of friends always, and all the better after availing ourselves of one of the greatest privileges of true friendship — quarrelling."

He shook her hand, kissed her lightly on

both cheeks, and went away, leaving her standing in the middle of the room, with her eyes on the ground.

By-and-bye she roused herself, bathed her face, and stood by the open window until all traces of emotion had disappeared. When the gong sounded for the mid-day meal, she went downstairs, humming a gay little tune under her breath.

In the hall she overtook the Lennoxes and Horace Bulkeley, walking leisurely towards the Speisesaal; and saluted the Professor with unusual graciousness.

"What a beautiful day!" she exclaimed as he paused to return her greeting. "I was suggesting to your daughter, just now, that we should take advantage of this fine weather to make one or two little expeditions. She tells me she is sometimes at a loss for a companion and cannot wander far in consequence. I should be delighted to take her for a walk occasionally when she has nothing better to do — to-morrow, for instance, if it is as fine as to-day, we might go for a ramble, and finish up with coffee at one of the restaurants at the other side of the wood."

"Oh!" cried Juliet, with a spring of delight as she seized her father's arm. "Oh, what a

lovely plan! Do come too, Daddy — do! Just for once, let us have a real happy idle day together."

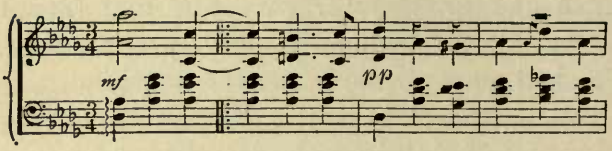
"Yes, sir," put in Christian, who had now joined the group; "pray be idle, and then I can be idle too with an approving conscience. We shall work all the better for it afterwards."

"Well, then," said the Professor, looking down at Juliet's bright pleading face, "for once I will agree to take a holiday; but after this you young folks must be content to be idle without me."

"But that is perfect," said Annola, with a graceful inclination towards Mr. Lennox; then, turning to Bulkeley, "Will not this gentleman also consent to be of the party?"

Horace willingly agreed, and they separated on the understanding that, weather permitting, they should start on their expedition at three o'clock on the morrow.

CHAPTER VIII



THE next day proved as perfect as even Juliet could desire, and at the appointed hour the party set forth. Christian looked very boyish in white flannels, which became him mightily, and his bright face was a contrast to the careworn countenance of Annola, who to-day made no pretence of light-heartedness, and walked in silence, and with a preoccupied air.

"Just see those two children," said the Professor, his face all kindly smiles as he looked after Christian and Juliet who had run on ahead, talking eagerly and pointing out to each other certain woodland wonders. "How happy they are! What a wonderful thing is youth! *We* should not care to go scrambling over marshy places and clambering up steep banks."

"They will lose themselves," cried Annola, starting forward; "they should keep to the

path. Where are you going, Christian?" she cried, raising her voice.

"I want to show Miss Lennox a wren's nest," he called back, over his shoulder.

"Will you not go with them," she said, turning to Horace with a forced laugh. "These young people will get into mischief if they are left to themselves. Feather-heads!"

"No, no," cried Mr. Lennox, clutching at Bulkeley's arm. "I will not have him victimised. *He* does not want to inspect wrens' nests! He wants to talk to me — and to you, mein Fräulein — and they do not want him to spoil sport. Young things are best left to themselves."

Annola said no more, but continued to walk along abstractedly, her eyes seeking to pierce the thickets, amid which she could every now and then catch a glimpse of Juliet's muslin skirts, or of Christian's white-clad form. They did not wander far, and their voices were often distinctly audible; but strain her ears as she might she could not catch what they said. She had not bargained for this state of affairs when proposing the expedition, and was now conscious of a feeling akin to rage, in recalling that she had of her own accord laid herself open to this exquisite form of torture.

Meanwhile Professor Lennox theorised and

philosophised to his heart's content, and tranquilly enjoyed the sunshine and the warm sweet air. Horace answered occasionally when an answer seemed to be required, but he, too, was ill at ease. By-and-bye the unresponsiveness of his companions appeared to strike Mr. Lennox, and he paused in his flow of speech. Annola's preoccupation was evident to him; he was surprised and disappointed to find her so uncompanionable; many of his sallies, indeed, had been designed to draw her out. Perhaps, after all, he had been mistaken in his estimate of her and had been talking over her head.

No one could adapt himself more readily to his company than the Professor when he chose. Turning to her now, with a half apologetic and wholly charming smile he began to speak of musical matters; discussing Christian in particular, and auguring for him a great future.

"He has every qualification needful to a musician," he said: "the temperament, the physique, the necessary ambition, and, I am pleased to see, sufficient aplomb. That power of absorption in his art is of itself a wonderful gift — it will be a safeguard against the fatal nervousness which is the ruin of many a fine player."

"Yet surely he will have his moments of

nervousness too," put in Horace. "I am told the artistic nature is not complete without it. He will conquer it, of course, as others have done and must do. Even ——" (naming a certain renowned violinist) "suffered from it at one time so acutely that, as his Impresario once related to me, he more than once implored him to send the audience away. 'Why,' he asked, 'should those crowds come to listen to a fool like me?' Once he actually put his head down upon his instrument and hid his face, like a woman!"

"A woman!" exclaimed Annola, turning upon him fiercely. "Say a child — it was the child in him that acted so foolishly. A woman would have had more self-restraint."

"Come, come," said the Professor, delighted to see her emerge from her shell, and quite unconscious of the secret source of this sudden irritability, "no need for you to stand up so fiercely for your sex. Surely all geniuses have in them something of the woman."

"Genius is a sexless thing, Monsieur. It is god-like in that it creates and brings forth of its own essence. It is neither male nor female — it stands apart."

She paused for a moment, wheeling round so as to face the two men.

"I grant you this much: many of the qualities which are essential to genius are commonly and thoughtlessly believed to be peculiarly feminine. Genius must be expansive if it would exist — it must do away with reserve, it must confide its loves and sorrows to the world, it must pour them forth into the ear of the public as a woman is supposed to prattle her so-called secrets to her friends."

Mr. Lennox screwed up his mouth with a whimsical expression, and shot an amused glance at her from under his white brows.

"Let us hear," he said. "How do you work out this theory?"

"Sir," cried she, "what are they always doing, these geniuses? What is their life's work but the laying bare of their secret soul? What is poetry but the exposition in beautiful words of the author's keenest emotions? What is painting, what is music, but the outward expression of that which is most vividly present to the artist's heart? Art is simply the épanchement of Genius — a reticent genius therefore cannot exist. Do we not owe some of the most exquisite music of many of the great composers to the unhappy passions by which they were swayed. A common man would have kept such troubles to himself and

been corrupted and degraded by them — in beings such as these dross itself is turned to gold."

"Aha," said the Professor, looking at her with his head on one side. "H'm, h'm."

"Vulgar ideas," she went on, "commonly received notions are sometimes worth analysis if only to prove their falsity. We are talking of reticence, are we not? Ah, reticence is a fine thing, an essentially manly quality; among women it is rare, if not entirely absent — is it not so? Well, I tell you that the reticent man is the commonplace man; he who speaks his mind, he who is not afraid to cry out when he is hurt, he who takes the world into his confidence when he loves, or hates, or grieves, or rejoices, he is the great man. Now, which is the greater of you two? Monsieur, is it not?" — laying her hand for a moment on the Professor's sleeve — "well, it is Monsieur who must speak out of his inmost soul, and this one" — with a somewhat scornful sidelong look at Horace — "who will suffer many things without a word."

"I am not sure," said Mr. Lennox, reflectively. "I have always looked upon myself as a reserved person; it is not my habit to wear my heart upon my sleeve."

"No," she interrupted quickly, "but you draw little diagrams of it and publish them at intervals so that all the world may know its exact state. Do not deny it — you are a writer, and though you may do so unconsciously, your real thought is bound to come out in your work. But to continue," she resumed, walking on again, her head bent a little forward, her hands clasped behind her, "reticence, as we agreed, is rarely to be found among women, yet you may find it in me if you choose to look for it. And why? Because there are in me the elements of genius — ah, you may not believe me, but it is true! What a contradiction, is it not? I claim to be reticent on the score of genius, having just said that genius and reticence cannot co-exist! But wait a little — the *elements* of genius I said — not genius itself. I am a barren trunk, messieurs, which will never bring forth flowers or fruit, which was blasted before the sap had time to rise. My genius is dumb, and therefore it is not! and therefore though my heart were torn from my body I would not cry out."

She stopped short again, bringing forward her arms and clutching at her bosom, and then throwing out her hands with a passionate gesture.

"Very interesting," said Professor Lennox, half to himself; "most interesting."

Bulkeley, however, was distinctly uncomfortable; he felt that some secret well-spring of bitterness was at the bottom of Annola's talk, but could not divine its nature. He certainly did not consider her a pleasant companion and moreover her antagonism to himself surprised as much as it offended him. What had called it forth? Surely not his failure to respond at once to her appeal with regard to accompanying the young folk? That would be too absurd. And yet — he had misgivings on the subject.

Meanwhile the voices of the "children," as Mr. Lennox dubbed them, sounded ever more blithely in their ears, and, when at last they all met at a juncture of paths a little distance from their destination, their faces were glowing and radiant.

"We have found such a lot of mushrooms," said Juliet, "and oh, such lovely toadstools! I should like to make a collection of toadstools, Daddy; they keep beautifully in spirits of wine — only I am afraid you wouldn't like to travel about with so many little bottles."

"And I have been relating the history of the robber cave," said Christian.

"It is a very romantic story," chimed in Juliet.

"The caves are not far from here, right under the mountain. The robber's wife used to steal geese — I think it should have been something more soul-stirring than geese. It takes the edge off the tragedy to think she only stole geese, because one might do that without marrying a robber and living in a cave. Do you know any robber stories, Mr. Bulkeley?" she asked.

She was walking by his side now, with Annola on the other hand, her father and Christian having fallen behind.

"Ah, you are fond of robber stories?" said Annola. "I will tell you one if you like."

"A true one?" cried Juliet, with sparkling eyes.

"Necessarily a true one; it is my own. When I was about your age, Miss Lennox, I thought the whole world was at my feet — I thought I had only to stretch out my hand to lay hold of whatever prize I would. I was not a good, gentle, well brought up girl like you," with a scarcely perceptible sneer, "but en revanche I was clever — ten times, twenty times cleverer than you. I had a mind that could grasp like the mind of a man — of an intellectual man; I had the power of seizing in a moment the dramatic aspect of things, and moreover the gift of

reproducing it. Had Fate been kind to me, I should have been the greatest tragic actress of my time."

No one seeing her expressive face and impassioned gestures could deem the boast unfounded.

"I had besides an extraordinary talent for music; I had a voice, a golden voice people called it — ah, I should have been heard of, had Fate been kind. Listen, Miss Lennox: I was not meek and good and tame, as I have told you; I was passionate and unruly. In my home, in the midst of my family, a noble family, be it said" — with a shrug — "full of the antiquated narrow-minded traditions, supposed to be essential to rank, my genius had no scope. I determined therefore to break with my family. I cast it off one day and ran away. I went to Pesth first, where I starved and studied, and then I travelled to Vienna, where I went on the stage as a chorus-girl to keep myself alive. By-and-bye I was given small parts; and then by a lucky chance I made a hit, and was advancing by leaps and bounds when I was struck down. You hear me? Bah! you have noticed my voice before — what a voice, is it not? The very crows are musical compared to me. I made a maladie — diphtheria it was — and Death was

cruel enough to spare me, and I am now — what I am!"

She paused: Juliet did not dare to speak, but her sympathetic face told even more plainly than words how great was her compassion.

"My people had shut their doors to me," went on Annola. "Not that I should ever have gone back to them — I would have died first — I was too proud; besides I would never have relinquished my liberty. They announced that I had taken the veil. The veil!" she smiled grimly — "and I, to spare their susceptibility, assumed another name. I call myself 'Istó' as you know, which is a diminutive of Stephen in our language. I was born on St. Stephen's day, and it is as good a name as another. Were I to mention my real name you would perhaps be surprised: it is known all over Europe. So there I was — homeless, hopeless, without an object in life, and with all that genius tearing at my heart."

Here, after a comprehensive gesture that seemed to describe at once the emptiness of her external life and the struggles of the pent-up passion within, she paused with the air of a tragedy queen.

"I should have died," she went on in a lower and softer tone, "I should have died if I had

not chanced to find Christian. Out of his young promise and power I built up my hopes anew; our lives are one — he cannot exist without me nor I without him. He would have made nothing of his extraordinary gift if it had not been for me. He was a poor boy without the means or opportunities of studying, absolutely unknown, absolutely dependent. He would have had to labour with those hands, mademoiselle, those delicate, wonderful, precious hands, to gain his daily bread, if it had not been for me. But I took him; out of the pittance that barely sufficed for myself I supported him; many a time I have had hunger, Miss Lennox, that there might be more for him to eat. But oh! I was recompensed by his rapid progress. Many a wintry night I have sat up shivering, yet with my heart dancing within me because of the strides he was making. Now better times have come, thank Heaven: we have at least enough to eat and I need no longer work so hard. I have classes for elocution. Yes, even in spite of my voice people have recognised my dramatic gift: I have trained many a successful actress. I also give lessons in gesture. Yes, all will go well if Christian perseveres as he should."

She was speaking more slowly now and fixed

Juliet with a peculiar look. Of Horace she took absolutely no notice. "There are moments," she continued, "when I tremble for his future. I say to myself, 'My God, what if after all he should fail me now! What if he should turn aside just as the prize is in his grasp?'"

"But surely," said Juliet, seeing that she was expected to speak, and being in truth absolutely astonished and dismayed, "surely that is not likely. Herr Thal seems so full of his work, so ambitious. Why, he is longing for the time when his career may fairly begin. Besides, how could he suppress such a talent?"

"He is incurably light-minded," went on Annola, "fickle, reckless of consequences. Nothing seems to make any serious impression on him. Of late he has been idle — idle and ungrateful. Yes, I ask myself sometimes whether, after all my sacrifices, he will not yet play me false. But as to that, he cares nothing for my sacrifices. He is capable of taking everything from me and then throwing me aside."

Her face was working, her hands clasping and unclasping each other convulsively.

"I think you misjudge him," said Juliet, much grieved and shocked. "Only the other day he told me that you had done everything

for him, and that he hoped to repay you by his success."

"He told you that?" said Annola, quickly. "When?"

"On Thursday, I think," said Juliet, conscientiously. She was very pink and felt extremely uncomfortable. "He told me everything—almost everything that you have told me—and he said he was counting on paying you back a hundred fold."

"When did he tell you all this?" inquired Annola, looking at her fixedly. "Oh, I remember—Thursday I think you said—in the morning when he should have been practising, I suppose? Yes, he makes fine speeches and great resolves, and he won't take the necessary steps for accomplishing them. What is to become of his technique if he does not practise, and unless his technique is perfect how can he be a great musician? It is because I have so ardent a wish for his success that I insist on these things, yet directly my back is turned he behaves like a silly schoolboy, playing truant."

"I am afraid," said Juliet, "it was partly my fault: I should not have encouraged him to talk."

Her conscience-stricken face and naïve manner caused even Annola to relax.

"Well, it would be kinder in the long run to leave him to himself," she said, more gently, yet with a latent earnestness which the girl entirely failed to understand. "You wish my artist well, I am sure—do not encourage him to be idle. It would be wiser to keep out of his way."

"I will," promised Juliet, with a little nod. She felt as if she herself had been scolded, and moreover was anxious to divert Fräulein Istó's wrath from Christian; the latter appearing to her for the nonce somewhat in the light of a playmate, whose misconduct she had unwittingly abetted. She was now anxious to change the conversation. "I thought," she said gaily, "that you were going to tell me the story of a robbery. You said it was to be a robber story."

"Did I?" returned Annola, and then she paused. She had set out on her history with very different intentions, but Juliet's attitude had disarmed her. "A robber story—what can I have been thinking of? But yes, of course: do you not see it was Fate who was the thief? Cruel Fate who robbed me of my career. So long as he does not again deprive me of my hopes!"

"Oh, no, I am sure," returned Juliet, again

vaguely discomfited by her tone and manner. "I think I will just run back to my father; he does not like to walk so fast."

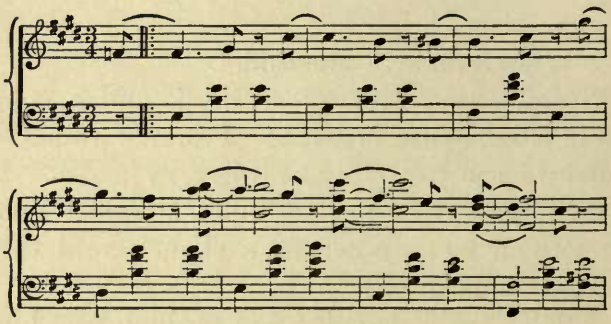
Annola looked after her without disquietude, but rather with a kind of contemptuous amusement.

"What a child!" she said.

"Yes," cried Horace. "She is still a complete child, thank Heaven! I for one would be sorry to see her older or wiser by a day. It would be a great responsibility, Fräulein Istó, to tarnish by so much as a chance word that perfect innocence."

"Bah!" said Annola; and pushing past him she walked on in silence.

CHAPTER IX



FOR the next few days Juliet sedulously kept out of Christian's way during the hours when he might be supposed to pursue his studies; a mark of consideration which that young gentleman took in very evil part.

"Why do you never come to hear me play?" he inquired, meeting her one day upon the stairs. "Are you already tired of me?"

"Oh, no, indeed: I am afraid of interrupting and perhaps making you talk."

"Well, do you not like me to talk?"

"Not when you ought to be practising," said Juliet, with a very demure air.

"All sorts of stupid people come to listen to me," he went on, discontentedly. "Everyone who is in the hotel. Herr Schmidt stands in the passage and the waiters and cook-maids, and people like that, come outside the window. I don't want them."

"I thought you liked crowds," said she, mischievously.

"Why do not you and your father come to the reading room after dinner?" he insisted petulantly.

"My father generally writes in the evening," said she.

"And you, why do you not come as well as everybody I don't want? Do come to-night — do. I will not talk. I promise you, not one word — but I will play to you."

Juliet laughed and promised; after all, even Fräulein Istó could not reproach her for this. And since so many people came to listen, it seemed a little hard that she, who perhaps loved music better than any of them, should be obliged to stay away.

"It is a promise," said Christian, as she went on down the stairs. "Remember that, no matter how many are in the room, I shall be playing only for you."

"Thank you," said Juliet. She turned to cast

back at him one of her bright glances and was a little startled at his expression.

Why did he look so strange? she thought; her own heart began to beat, she knew not why, and she ran downstairs very fast.

"Why, what rosy cheeks!" said her father. "This place certainly suits you."

Christian kept his word, and spoke not a syllable to Juliet that evening, but she thought that she would almost have known he was playing for her even had he not told her so. His *répertoire* was composed only of what she had previously said she liked, and he added as an after-thought a sequence of Russian dances which she had never heard before, but which she instinctively felt were intended as a special tribute to her prowess. She was fluttered and excited, and perhaps more carried away by the music than she had ever been before. On going upstairs she went into her father's room to say good night, and began to describe her pleasure enthusiastically. "He played some Russian dances," she said, with an odd tremor in her voice. "I had never heard them before, Daddy — I think he must have played them on account of my dancing, you know."

"Very likely," said her father. "You look

well to-night, child — you look very well: this place certainly agrees with you."

"Oh, because I am so happy!" cried Juliet. "It is such a lovely place; I simply adore it. Only look at the stars to-night."

"The stars are not peculiar to Schönwald," said the Professor.

"I don't know; I think they shine more brightly here than in other places. And oh, Daddy, look at the silvery light over the town yonder. It looks as if a little tiny baby search-light had been thrown over it."

Her father laughed and nodded, and she passed through the long French window into the balcony, where she stood leaning against the railing, and resting her flushed cheek upon her hand.

All at once she started. Some one had pronounced her name, and, looking down, she saw a figure standing in the moonlight immediately beneath her.

"Miss Lennox!"

"Yes; it is you, Herr Thal, is it not?"

"Yes. Did you like the dances? I played them to remind you of that morning in the wood."

"I thought you did," cried she, delightedly. "That little one in the middle with the swing-

ing movement — the very quaint one, you know, that went like this" — humming the air. "I guessed you meant it for the swaying of the trees. You were thinking of that, were you not?"

"No," returned Christian. "I was just thinking of you."

"Oh," said Juliet in an altered voice. Then after a pause, "Good night — I am going in now."

"Good night. You are not angry?" She shook her head, and went indoors.

"Going to bed?" said her father, as she dropped a gentle little kiss on his bent head. "That is right. Go to bed, and get some beauty sleep."

But there was not much sleep for Juliet in the early hours of that night; the varied fantastic rhythm of Liadow's dance sequence seemed to float and throb in her brain. Whether she stared with wide-open eyes at the darkness, or whether she resolutely closed them, the figure of Christian was alike present to her; the face with its ever changeful expression, the long, powerful hands. And his voice sounded in her ears, oddly mingled with the pulsing of the music:

"I shall be playing only for you. . . . I was just thinking of you."

Towards dawn she fell asleep, and only woke to find her room flooded with brilliant sunshine, while the clatter of cups in the verandah beneath warned her that it was breakfast time.

"I think Mr. Lennox has gone down," remarked Andrews, who was surveying her from the foot of the bed. "I have been in twice, but you was that sweet asleep I didn't like to disturb you."

As Juliet sprang up other sounds fell upon her ear: Christian was already practising his scales. She laughed aloud with an inexplicable feeling of relief. She had at first felt as if something unusual had happened and behold! everything was just the same as ever.

"What a lovely day!" she cried jubilantly; "Andrews, we will go out directly after breakfast and explore."

"I thought maybe you would like to sit out to-day," suggested Andrews, rather timidly. "There is your white blouse. It seems a funny thing that something always happens to take me off just when I feel regular inspired to sew."

"I am not in the least in a hurry for it. No, no, we will go for a good walk — right out of the beaten track."

They sallied out, therefore, as soon as might

be after the morning meal, and leaving the paths behind, plunged into the very heart of the woods, their feet now sinking deep in fallen leaves, now slipping on wet moss, now stumbling over unseen roots. Juliet laughed and chattered as they walked; and Andrews panted and groaned and thought ruefully of the unfinished blouse; and all at once dropped down upon a fallen tree-trunk declaring she could go no further.

"Very well. Let us rest awhile," conceded her mistress. "I am not sorry to stay a little longer in this pretty spot."

It was a sort of clearing in the midst of a pine plantation into which the sunshine came pouring with most comfortable radiance; the grass grew thickly, and here and there were even a few lingering wild flowers. Juliet sat down on the further end of the log and fell silent all at once. Andrews brought out a half-finished collar from some hidden receptacle, and began to stitch with a relieved countenance. A squirrel scrambled and chattered in a neighbouring tree. The light fell on his ruddy coat, and on the trunk to which he was clinging. Juliet, looking up, marked it absently, and observed further, as she gazed pensively down the glade, how each of the tall stems of

fir and beech was touched, at a uniform height from the ground, with a streak of sunshine, so that the glowing oasis which she had made her resting-place would seem to be indicated by a fiery finger to all wanderers in the outer desert of green.

"The musical young gentleman didn't stick long to his practising," remarked Andrews, presently, as she bit off a thread. "He seems to be coming up here."

Juliet woke with a start from her reverie, and saw that Christian was indeed making his way towards them amidst the sunlit trees.

"I knew this path would guide me to you," he observed a moment later as he paused, a little breathless, a pace or two away. "I feared you had escaped me, but when I found a path of light, I knew I must be on your track."

"You ought to be studying," said Juliet, severely.

"I am not in the mood to-day. The woods were calling me, do you see? I was obliged to come."

"That seems a funny thing," remarked Andrews. "When Miss Juliet came here she said the same. Do you remember the first night, Miss Juliet, you had to go and stand under the trees because you said they were calling you?"

Here Andrews glanced up with a smile that was half proud and half indulgent, as though inviting comment on the clever fancies of her former nursling.

"Ah! you have felt that, too?" cried Christian, turning to Juliet. "You always seem to discover such beautiful spots," continued he, dreamily, as he looked about him, "or is it you who make them beautiful?"

"I don't like the beaten track, as I told you," said she. "Now, Andrews, if you are rested, let us be getting home."

"Let me first show you a favourite walk of mine," he pleaded. "It is not far from here. It is quite, quite solitary — a wood all of firs which have never been thinned out, and which grow so close together that you can scarcely squeeze between them; it smells all gum and spice in that place, and the light can hardly get in — there are only little points of it here and there — and the ground is thickly covered with slippery needles. Do come; it is still quite early."

"Well, perhaps if we make haste," said she, hesitating. "Come, Andrews — be quick."

"Miss Juliet, there's things a body can't do," said Andrews, firmly. "How do you think I'm going to manage walking on slippery fir leaves,

among trees that close together? The gentleman himself says he can hardly get through, and I'm sure he's slight enough. No, really, miss, if you must go, I'll stop here till you come back."

"Yes, yes, that will be much the best plan," cried Christian. "We could never have got the good woman along," he remarked seriously, as soon as they were out of earshot.

They ran together out of the plantation, down a steep bank, across a deserted roadway; and then were forced to proceed more cautiously, for here the ground was marshy and threaded by streams which they sometimes jumped over, and sometimes crossed by means of stepping-stones, Christian in each case extending his hand to his companion.

Now they climbed up a winding path between low-growing elders and hazels, and at last emerged on a grassy plateau which was bordered by the belt of pines described by the musician. They were silent as they penetrated into its shady, fragrant depths; a stray shaft of light fell now and then across Juliet's figure, as she glided noiselessly amid the slender, densely-packed stems. Once a blackbird flew out shrieking, and once a hare started up almost from beneath their feet. At last the trunks became less serried, spaces of grass appeared

between the tawny patches of fir-needles, the sky was visible overhead; they had reached the further side of the copse where it adjoined the forest proper.

"We must go back," said Juliet, regretfully. "You are right — it is very beautiful. I am glad you brought me here."

"When I come here again," returned Christian, from the rear, "when perhaps in years hence I find myself here, I shall say to myself: 'On the twenty-fifth of September, eighteen hundred and ninety — *she* was here with me.'"

His voice shook a little as he spoke but Juliet did not heed it. She turned round with a startled look.

"The twenty-fifth of September!" she repeated. "Is that the date? I forgot — I did not think it was so near."

"What did you forget?" he asked, coming up to her.

"My birthday. I shall be seventeen on the day after to-morrow."

"Ah! I will remember to felicitate you."

"Please don't — it is a very sad day for my father and me."

"Of course, you are so old," said Christian, smiling.

"No — ah! you must not laugh. We are always very sorrowful on my birthday, my father and I; you see my mother died when I was born. I dare not try and comfort Daddy, because it seems as if his wound were so painful he could not bear a touch — his love and grief are just as fresh as ever after all these years."

"But that is beautiful," said Christian, gravely.

"I just sit and watch him," went on Juliet, sorrowfully, "and neither of us speaks a word — and we are both equally miserable."

"That should not be," broke in Christian, impulsively. "The remembrance of a great love should not bring suffering."

"When there is loss there must always be suffering," returned Juliet, as she slid gently through the close-growing trunks.

"What would you have?" he said. "Though two love each other, one must die before the other. Better to part thus, when the fire is at its height, than to sit one on each side of a cold hearth, looking at the ashes."

"But that never happens when there is real love," cried Juliet, decidedly.

"It happens," asserted the boy, with an air of superior wisdom. "Oh, yes, it happens only too often."

"I am quite certain that if my mother had lived, my father would have adored her always," she proceeded indignantly. "My mother was a lovely creature, quite, quite young, and wonderfully clever."

"Perhaps — who knows? — she might not always have adored him — particularly if she were much younger than he. I think the young should only marry the young; — it is not fair otherwise. A very old man does not want love; he only requires tenderness, and that the draughts should be kept away from him, and that his little bouillon or his little panada should be nicely served and very punctually."

The girl's colour rose; she turned round with sparkling eyes.

"You should not speak like that," she cried. "You should know better than to say such things in connection with my father."

He shrugged his shoulders. "I am sorry to have offended you, but I was not alluding to your father, in particular — your father is not yet a very old man. Nevertheless the day will come when these things will happen — you will think it quite natural and will cut yourself into four pieces in order to arrange everything to his taste. Do not be displeased; it is the inevitable, and why not face it? You see there

is here no question of love — only of filial tenderness. But for a wife — for a wife still young and beautiful, one must confess it would not be gay."

"I am disappointed in you. I thought your ideals were higher. Do you see that squirrel over there?"

Christian looked at her in surprise. The query was propounded in the same tone of indignant severity as that in which the previous reproach had been delivered, and he at first thought it had some bearing on the recent argument. But presently he burst out laughing.

"Yes, I see the squirrel. I am unworthy to discuss these abstract questions, am I not? You wish to confine our conversation to the strictly commonplace. Well, let us admire the beauties of Nature. The squirrel is very pretty and wonderfully agile. Blackbirds are also interesting creatures, particularly male blackbirds, because they have yellow beaks. Mrs. Blackbird is not so captivating. Now it is your turn to say something. Say you admire Mrs. Blackbird, and then we can have quite innocent argument."

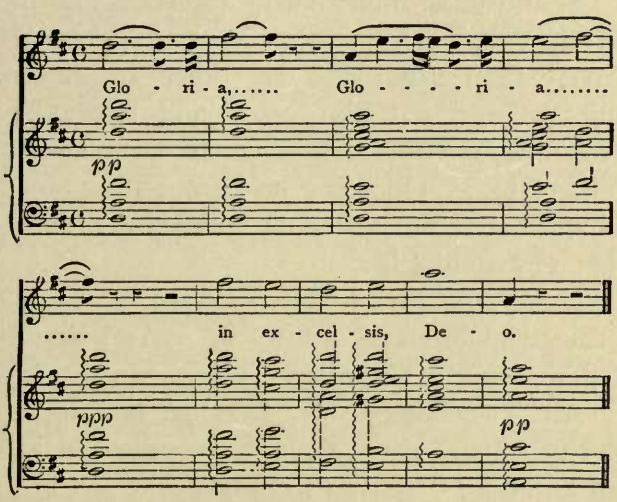
"But I don't admire her," cried Juliet. The corners of her mouth were twitching, and her wrath had already subsided. "She is a dowdy

little creature, not worthy of her handsome mate."

"Miss Lennox," exclaimed the musician, standing still, and throwing out his hand, "you speak flippantly. Now you have revealed yourself in your true colours, and I can again hold up my head. I thought your ideals were higher and I am disappointed in you. The bright eye of Mr. Blackbird doubtless penetrates beyond the exterior. It is the solid qualities of his spouse that have gained his heart."

Juliet laughed in spite of herself; whereupon he laughed too, so boyishly and gleefully that her lingering vexation melted away, and they ran out of the wood as happily as they had entered it.

CHAPTER X



JULIET came pensively downstairs on the morning of her birthday. It was a lovely day — another of the bright golden series that autumn sometimes steals from an ungenerous summer. It seemed a pity that everyone could not be joyous and happy, but Juliet dared to be neither the one nor the other this sunny morning.

"Miss Lennox," said a voice behind her, and turning she saw Christian leaning out of the reading-room window. "At least you must let

me say how many good things I wish you," he murmured, and would have added more, but that at this moment the Professor's tall bent figure appeared in the doorway.

The musician immediately vanished, and the old man came forward, kissed Juliet more gravely than usual, and sat down in silence. Juliet poured out his coffee, and by-and-bye made one or two remarks which he answered and let drop. Once she said something about his work, and he looked up quickly and somewhat reproachingly:

"I shall not work to-day," he said.

She coloured and fell silent. And almost at this moment Christian Thal began to play.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Lennox, looking up angrily; "can he not leave us in peace for just half an hour? This is too much."

"I will tell him to stop, Daddy, shall I?" cried Juliet, half rising. "Shall I?" she repeated timidly a moment or two later, as the Professor made no answering sign. But already sweet and wonderful harmonies were floating towards them, and she saw that her father was listening.

"Sit down," he said presently under his breath. "What is he playing? I seem to know it — and yet — yes — do you know what it is,

Juliet? It is part of the *Gloria* in Gounod's 'Mass of St. Cecilia'; he has actually managed to adapt it to the piano. He is a wonder, that boy. Listen! One would think it was an orchestra. Hark! Now the Angels' voices come in — now he is improvising."

He relapsed into silence, and the music flowed on, sweet and solemn, with ever and anon a suggestion of rapt ecstatic joy. The Professor's face softened as he listened and his heart grew more tender, and all at once he stretched out his hand to Juliet, and she took it with a tremulous smile.

Christian played on, passing almost insensibly from one theme to another, but ever keeping up the same suggestion of solemn joy and peace; and after a time Juliet, looking at her father, saw that his eyes were wet.

By-and-bye with a final majestic sequence of chords, the music ceased, and rousing himself, the Professor said huskily:

"Tell him to come here — tell him I want him."

Hastening to the window, Juliet peered in at the musician. He was still seated at the piano, apparently sunk in thought.

"My father wants you, Herr Thal," said she.

He looked round with a start, rose, and in

a moment swung himself out of the window. The Professor smiled as he noted the action, and the youthful vigour of the form that came striding up to his chair. Christian wore his flannels that warm day, the shirt was open at the throat, and the sleeves rolled up half way between the wrist and elbow; a casual observer at that moment would have thought him more like an athlete than an artist, but the comparison would have been belied by his face. It was as white almost as his raiment, and yet lit up as by some inward glow; transfigured, inspired, majestic even — a painter would have deemed him a superb model for a triumphant St. Michael or St. George. Mr. Lennox leaned forward and took him by the hand.

"You played for me, my boy," he said.

"Yes," returned Christian, simply.

"I need not ask if you know what day this is. I thank you — you have done me good."

Christian bowed in silence; he was trembling. The Professor felt the twitching of the hand which he still grasped, and gazed meditatively, first at it, and then at the sensitive face.

"I want to talk to you," he said, giving the hand a final pressure and releasing it. "You interest me very much. Are you aware of

the scope and power of this wonderful gift of yours?"

Christian's face was all a-quiver with excitement, and his voice was unsteady as he answered that he thought he hoped to do great things some day.

"Great things," repeated the old man: "I wonder if you know how great? Now understand, my boy, I have no wish whatever to puff you up with idle praise, but to make you realise the responsibilities of your high calling. Yours is a sublime vocation — you are called to a great priesthood. You should dwell for ever in the high places — remember that all your life."

Rising, he placed his hands on Christian's shoulders, and the two looked into each other's eyes; the old man's face was still astir with his recent emotion, his deep-set eyes were glowing, and fixed with a curious intentness. He looked a seer, a mystic; and the youth as he gazed at him felt as though a prophet were speaking.

"Such genius as yours," pursued the Professor, "is the very breath of God. Listen well; I am not using a mere figure of speech — I say the words deliberately. When people talk idly about 'sacred fire,' and the 'divine afflatus,' they do not realise they are indeed speaking the

truth. Such genius as yours, I repeat it with all reverence, is an emanation from the very Spirit of God—the Spirit that moveth and quickeneth. Bow before it, young man, and pray Heaven for strength to fulfil your destiny.

He leaned upon the boy's broad shoulders with a momentary pressure as though he would have forced him to his knees. Christian's eyes dilated, his lips parted; his form swayed a little under the compelling grasp: in another moment he would indeed have knelt at the Professor's feet had not the latter by suddenly removing his hands, broken the spell.

"Remember it," he went on, still in the same impressive tone, himself almost as deeply moved as the young musician; "remember it is not for yourself that you have received this marvellous power; not that you should master the world, but that you should serve the world by uplifting and purifying it. You can do it if you will—you can do it! Do I not know it? Have I not myself succumbed to your power? I tell you my heart was like a stone when I arose this morning and in your hands it became as wax. Oh, my boy, keep those hands of yours clean, keep your feet upon the mountain-tops! 'How beautiful on the mountain-tops are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth

peace' — such peace as you have given me to-day."

All her life long did Juliet remember that scene — so strange amid its incongruous surroundings. The clatter of hotel life going on as usual a few paces away from them; waiters passing and repassing, the sisters Krell waddling up the path from the town, each swinging a glass by a leather strap, a couple of maids shaking a rug by the open door — and here, under the plum tree, this white-haired prophet pouring forth into the ear of the young ardent neophyte the revelation which his own sorrow and the new-found softness of his heart had given him to speak.

Juliet's eyes were dim, and her heart beat fast. What a man was this father of hers! How far-seeing, how wise, how noble! And the boy! Hearkening with that rapt face, a face that seemed to glow with a kind of white fire of spiritual passion — was he not indeed fit to go forth and conquer the world?

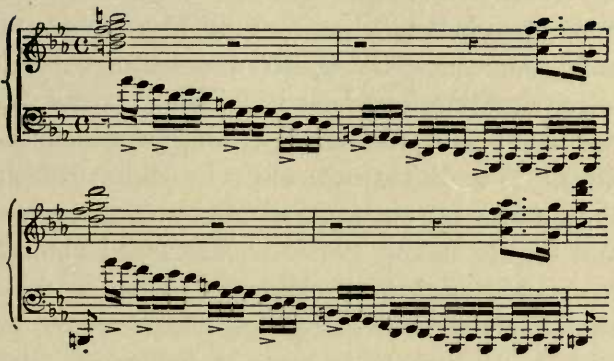
Words were struggling to Christian's lips, but before he had time to speak them he caught sight of Horace Bulkeley, who just then came strolling leisurely forth.

"I will not forget," he said hurriedly, "I will never forget."

And without waiting to greet Horace he walked away slowly with head bent and downcast eyes, and re-entered the house.

Drawing her arm through his the Professor strolled with Juliet into the woods, where they wandered for an hour or two. They did not speak much, but Juliet felt very peaceful and content. Never had she known such a happy birthday.

CHAPTER XI



JULIET went to bed that night as calmly happy as any maid of seventeen could wish to be; yet long before she woke she was conscious of vague disquietude and uneasiness. At last, starting from a feverish dream of tempest and shipwreck she realised that the turmoil came from without, that the world in fact was groaning under a fierce and sudden storm. Sitting up and looking towards her uncurtained window, she could see the dark shapes of the trees writhing, tortured by the blast; she could hear the rain beat upon the panes, being dashed against them every now and then by a violent gust as a wave is dashed upon a rock; straining

her eyes in the dim light, she could see whole flocks of the broad leaves of the plane trees whirling past like flights of storm birds, and the wind blew throughout with such a moaning eerie sound, sometimes sinking to a low mutter and sometimes rising to a scream, that she fairly shuddered to hear it. She lay awake till her usual hour for rising, feeling troubled and uneasy, she knew not why; in all probability the state of the elements reacted on her sensitive and highly strung nerves. Every sad thought that could suggest itself came to her mind as she lay there: she thought of her pretty mother who had died when only a few years older than she was now, of her father's advancing years, and how little she could do to help and comfort him; of Annola's disagreeable face, and of a certain significant glance of hers as Juliet had passed her on going to bed. What had she meant by it? Did she think her admiration of Christian's playing exaggerated? And yet surely no admiration could be too great! Perhaps she deemed Juliet forward in expressing it — she must be more careful in future, she reflected; yet how difficult it was to keep silence when so deeply moved.

"This is a nice morning, miss, I'm sure," remarked Andrews when she brought the girl's

cup of tea. "They don't seem to make no provision at all for cold weather in this house. I said I supposed you'd be having breakfast in the spysal this morning, and the waiter says that 'ud be impossible. 'Never in the spysal,' he says. So I said: 'Where will you give it to them then? Do you think my gentleman and my young lady are like geese or ducks that they want to take their breakfasts out there in the pouring rain?' So he said he supposed you'd take it in your rooms."

"In our rooms!" ejaculated Juliet; "I don't like that idea. Surely there must be some other place."

"That's what he said," asseverated Andrews, lugubriously. "Either outside or in your rooms is the rule of this place, being a Lift-cure-out, he said — whatever he meant by that! Why, there isn't a lift here at all. And never a sign of a fire anywhere that I can see, only little black holes in the walls where them nasty stoves 'ull be coming — not that they're much good to anyone! There's no denying, Miss Juliet, England's the land for comfort."

She set down the cup with a heavy sigh and withdrew.

Juliet drank her tea, which tasted more of hay than anything else, and, being possessed of

one of those natures which deem it incumbent upon them to endeavour to be the more cheerful the more they find other folks affected by depressing surroundings, she resolved bravely to make the best of the day.

She had almost completed her toilet when a loud single knock at the door took her by surprise. On opening it she found a very minute waiter balancing on his five finger-tips a tray bearing breakfast for one.

"I did not order it here," protested she.

The waiter repeated the explanation he had already given to Andrews. Such he announced was the invariable rule at a Luftkurort.

"But my father?" said Juliet.

"The gracious gentleman has slept badly and will not breakfast for another hour."

There was evidently nothing for it but to submit, and Juliet sat down to eat her repast in her cold, disordered room with what appetite she might possess. By-and-bye another knock at her door heralded the arrival of Andrews and the housemaid.

"We are going to do the room now, miss," said the maid; "we sha'n't be long, and perhaps you'd like to go to the sitting room till we have finished."

Juliet stood hesitating, not wishing to dis-

turb her father, whose practice it was to leave open the door which connected his bedroom with their joint sitting room, yet dreading Annola's displeasure if she ventured to go down to the reading room. Presently she heard the piano and paused to listen.

"If he is practising his exercises, I will not go down," she said to herself; "I will not have Fräulein Istó saying I prevent him from doing serious work."

But a moment's attention assured her that this was no exercise. He was playing Chopin. After all, why should not she go down and listen? He would be too much absorbed to notice her, and Annola could say nothing: the reading room was common to all.

Downstairs she went, feeling almost irresistibly drawn by the sounds, catching her breath, indeed, as she stood in the passage without. Ah, how he was playing, with what passion and force, and how well the subject assorted with the day! It was the "Storm Study," taken at break-neck speed, and rendered as it seemed to her with a kind of diabolical fierceness and fury. She shuddered and stood still for a moment with her fingers on the door-handle. The wind whistled down the corridor, making every door creak or bang; the rain had forced

its way through the skylight, and with each fresh gust dropped noisily into the pails set to catch it. Mingled with the actual strife of the elements was the thunder of Christian's music; the crash and roll of it filled Juliet's ears and brain. She could distinguish as it seemed to her the roaring of a forest in a gale, the shock of precipitated clouds, the leaping and rocking of waves; the solemn, warning toll of a lightship sounding at intervals. And through all this storm and stress of nature she was aware of the waging of another battle: a soul was struggling and crying out in anguish, and it seemed to her that the powers of evil were closing in upon it and stifling its voice.

She turned the handle softly, impelled by a sudden desire to look upon the face of the musician, but the door did not give way; she pushed, and discovered that it was locked.

Loosing the handle as gently as she had grasped it, she stood in silence waiting till he had finished. That human voice which she had thought to distinguish amid the passion of sound sobbed and pleaded and grew faint; the storm was passing — dying away; the tortured soul, weak with the recent struggle, continued at intervals — so it seemed to the girl's fancy — to appeal, and lament, and

reiterate its sorrowful denial. Now there came a sudden and terrible crash, a shriek of unholy triumph — and then silence. The tempter had conquered: the soul was lost.

Seized with unaccountable panic, Juliet again tried the door; she even rattled the handle, and knocked; but within all was deathlike silence. She would have called aloud, but was restrained by a movement of pride and wounded feeling. She turned away, pale, and holding her head high, to find Annola at her elbow.

She passed her quickly and fled upstairs with suddenly burning cheeks and a throbbing heart; but she had marked the gleam of triumph in Annola's eyes and the smile that curled her lips. All that day the thought of it stung her, and she was haunted besides by the memory of Christian's strange behaviour. That he should have locked himself in to begin with; she had thought it accidental at first, but now was convinced the precaution had been taken designedly; then that he should have taken no notice of her unconscious appeal, that he should not even have vouchsafed a word of explanation in answer to her knock — it was rude! It was positively insulting. She felt as though he had struck her.

As she sat motionless in her own room, now

trying to account for this sudden and extraordinary change, now wrathfully resolving never to give this unkind and unmannerly youth so much as another thought, she was conscious, during the occasional pauses in the storm, of a continued pacing to and fro in the room overhead, which she knew to be Annola's, and all at once the idea leaped into her mind that she had perhaps been shut out too — and she found it distinctly comforting.

She now began to strain her ears afresh for the notes of the piano, but, though as long as the wind raged and the rain lashed her window, her fancy cheated her with the notion that Christian was playing, and she could even have sworn that whole bars were borne to her ear athwart the medley of sounds, when the gale abated she became aware that all was silent, save for the throbbing of her own heart, and the measured footsteps overhead.

"Perhaps it is he who is walking in Annola's room," she said to herself, and her heart sank again.

As Juliet passed the reading room on her way to dinner, she could not resist a glance in its direction, and saw to her great surprise that the key was sticking in the lock — on the outer side of the door.

Could it be possible that his friend had locked him in? Was this the almost absurd explanation of the conduct which had puzzled her? Annola had locked him up to prevent his playing truant; and he had been too much chagrined at being thus treated to confess the fact to Juliet when she had knocked at the door. Her spirits went up with a bound, and she almost laughed aloud — so great was her relief.

She took her place at the table with a very bright face, eagerly watching for Christian's entrance. Her face was all dimpled with mischievous smiles: it would be impossible to resist teasing him presently about this, she thought.

But though Annola presently entered with a moody countenance, no Christian appeared.

The wind was a little less boisterous in the afternoon, but the rain was still falling in torrents, when Juliet, finding it too dark to read, betook herself somewhat mournfully to the window, where she remained for some time gazing out at the melancholy prospect.

The plane trees were almost stripped of their leaves; drifts of these, some scarcely edged with autumn yellow, were lying on the sodden soil. Round every tree was a miniature moat; a very

river raced impetuously over the terrace and down the incline towards the road; each branch and twig was a waterspout, adding its quota to the ever-increasing flood. The dripping woods were wrapt about with dense mist, all the glowing colours of yesterday giving place to a general monotonous gloom, though here and there through the grey shroud the drenched yellow branches of beech or birch pierced with almost uncanny effect.

As Juliet stood pressing her languid forehead against the pane, she suddenly saw a figure emerge from the mist and advance towards the house, without looking to right or to left. It was Christian. Christian, bare-headed, with his soaked clothes clinging to him, and his streaming hair pasted to his face. Rivulets of water fell from him at every movement; his shirt looked like a limp rag, his shoes were coated with mud. Juliet had no time to dwell upon these details, for her attention was at once riveted on his face. It was deadly pale — but with what a different pallor to that of yesterday! Now his very lips were white, every feature set and drawn, the brows frowning.

He entered the house without looking up, and listening intently she presently heard a door bang overhead.

The long day wore to a close at last: Juliet had been a prey during all those weary hours to many fears, and much wonder. Something had happened, she said to herself over and over again, something must have happened. She lingered a little after the supper-gong had sounded. Christian was always a little late, and she had a secret hope that he would overtake her on the stairs. She must ask him what was amiss. Perhaps he had received bad news — poor Christian!

It was almost dark on the stairs, and though she had purposely awaited the descent of someone from the flight above she gave a violent start when Annola's voice sounded close to her.

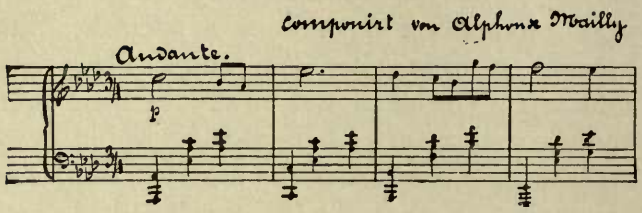
"He is not coming down," it said.

Poor little Juliet blushed hotly in the merciful darkness.

"Is he — is Herr Thal not well?" she faltered.

"He is perfectly well," responded the other, adding with insolent emphasis: "He does not care to come down."

CHAPTER XII



"MY dear Juliet," said her father when they met next morning in the newly improvised breakfast room which the authorities of the Schöne Aussicht, moved by the united protests of its guests, had grudgingly consented to place at their disposal. "My dear Juliet, are you not surprised at the sudden flight of our friends?"

For a moment the dreary little chamber, with its long oilcloth-covered table and rows of wooden chairs, seemed to spin round the girl; but she answered quietly:

"You mean the musician and Fräulein Istó, I suppose? Are they gone?

"I never was so much astonished at anything in my life," resumed her father. "Yes, gone; bag and baggage. I saw the fly drive away with both of them inside, and their luggage

piled up beside the driver. Did you know nothing of it then?"

She shook her head.

"I must say I am disappointed," went on Mr. Lennox. "It would have been civil to say good-bye . . . I have taken a good deal of trouble with that young man, too, and I had intended to help and advise him further before we parted. A little guidance, a weighty judicious word or two, is of very great use now and then to a young fellow in his position. Yes, I think I could have helped him," he continued, musing. "The lad interested me very much. He was sympathetic and responsive; I should have liked to keep in touch with him. It is a thousand pities he should have rushed off like that; I might have asked him to communicate with me now and then. These lads are all alike, I see: impressionable, impulsive — and too often ungrateful."

Juliet kept her eyes fixed on her plate and made a brave pretence of eating, though she felt as if every morsel must choke her; her heart swelled within her, and when the Professor sorrowfully passed judgment it seemed to cry out in fierce endorsement.

Oh, yes, Christian's conduct was unpardonable, inexplicable. To avoid them first as

though they, his friends, had ever done anything except admire and wish him well, and then to leave them without so much as a word — it was worse than ungrateful, it was almost offensive.

She made her escape as soon as possible after breakfast and sat down to think over matters in her own room; but in spite of long and painful meditation her brain remained as muddled as ever and her heart as sore.

Poor little Juliet! It was her first great disillusion, and she could not get over it. Christian had filled her thoughts more than she had been herself aware of, and now there came a great blank in her life which the sad and bitter memories he had left behind could not fill, incessantly though they preyed upon her.

The weather had broken; the Schöne Aussicht was emphatically a summer resort, and did not aspire to be anything else, so that at this time of year it was the reverse of comfortable. Certain black uninviting-looking stoves were indeed introduced into the living rooms where they made very poor cheer; the large china erection in the corner of the reading room was duly set going, with the result that the heads and faces of any occupants of the chamber burnt violently while their feet remained pro-

portionately cold. Yet Juliet's lonely little figure might often have been seen in the big room which looked so empty and dreary now. She would wander round it, sometimes pausing by the window, whence Christian had looked out on her that first morning, to recall his boyish talk; sometimes telling herself with a fierce heat of indignation that he had shown her from the first he was selfish and ungrateful; sometimes smiling in spite of herself, when her eyes rested on the placard with the threefold notice to which he had drawn her attention.

MAN BITTET NICHT ZU RAUCHEN! ON EST PRIÉ DE NE PAS FUMER.
SMOKING FORBIDDEN.

And sometimes she would open the piano, and gaze for a long time at the notes, striving to call back some of Christian's exquisite music. At least she had heard it: it would be something to remember all her life that she had heard it.

Horace came in one day and found her thus engaged.

"Are you going to play, Miss Lennox?" he asked.

"No," said Juliet, quickly, "I was only looking at the piano."

He glanced at her with troubled eyes, but went on speaking at random:

"Do you not play at all? I should have thought with such a perfect sense of rhythm you would have found pleasure in it."

She shook her head.

"Ah well," said he, "one cannot do everything. Your dancing is enough."

Her hand was already on the door-handle, but she paused to look back absently at the corner of the room where she had danced for him and Christian Thal.

"I shall never dance again," she said half to herself, then raising her eyes and looking defiantly at Bulkeley, she added: "I am too old."

Meanwhile the Professor was totally unconscious of his daughter's state of mind, and for his own part was perfectly content. His work proceeded smoothly, the emptiness of the place pleased him enormously; perhaps the absence of Christian which he had regretted at first became subsequently a source of satisfaction to him, being one notable cause of distraction the less; the gloomy weather also fell in with his mood, and even his little black stove. When the sun did not shine a man was less tempted to wander abroad, and when there were no little dancing flames or glowing crum-

bling caverns to induce one to sit idly in the chimney corner, study and work proceeded at a brisker pace.

"Yes," Mr. Lennox allowed one day, "this place suits me to a nicety. I don't know when I have been in better vein or felt it more easy to concentrate my attention. It is lucky you are so happy here too, Baby, and that I need have no scruple in remaining."

The Professor's power of concentration was indeed so exclusively bent on his work that he took no notice of his surroundings except in so far as they affected it. Even at meal times he would sit in perfect silence revolving some theory in his mind, or else he would converse exclusively concerning it with Juliet or Bulkeley. Bulkeley was a favourite with him, and was often invited to share his table, and Mr. Lennox would not infrequently on these occasions plunge into lengthy dissertations on the subject uppermost in his thoughts, Horace being sometimes an inattentive listener, for his eyes would wander in spite of himself to Juliet's face and he would tell himself discontentedly that it was growing smaller every day.

Professor Lennox's studious peace was, however, unexpectedly put an end to. As he and Juliet were descending the stairs on their way

to dinner one day they were aware of a great commotion in the hotel. The only two remaining waiters were hurrying distractedly hither and thither; Boots was labouring upstairs with a large canvas-covered trunk poised on his shoulder, followed by a cabman bearing a portmanteau. Schmidt, from the bottom step, was imperatively summoning Lena, the chambermaid, and a loud, clear, unmistakably British voice was talking rapidly in the hall.

"You ought to have a proper entrance; it is very inconvenient arriving by the back way. Ich liebe niche den Rückenweg, — nein, pas du tout. Où est ma boîte? Wo ist mien Koffer? Have you paid the driver — hasn't he got any change? Hat der Mann kein Wechseln — pas de change? Geben Sie mir zurück — da — jetzt ein pour-boire."

"Daddy!" cried Juliet, with such an ecstatic little laugh as she had not given for a long time, "only Countess de Galphi could speak such German — and such French! Oh, yes, there is her bonnet, the same dear old bonnet with the cock's feathers. Oh, I am so glad!"

She was jumping up and down now as she held on to the balusters.

"Countess de Galphi!" ejaculated the Professor, with a crest-fallen face. "Is he there too?

Now there is indeed an end of peace. Who would ever have dreamed of their coming here? I thought they were in Brussels."

Meanwhile Juliet had run downstairs and thrown her arms round the advancing form of a white-haired lady who was just beginning the ascent.

"So there you are!" cried Countess de Galphi, kissing her affectionately, if brusquely. "I thought we should catch you — came this way on purpose. How do you do, Professor; isn't this a surprise? We broke our journey here on your account — wasn't it good of us? Est ce qu'on a porté mes petites choses en haut?" she inquired, turning abruptly to Herr Schmidt. "Meine kleine Dinge. Ignace, cherchez vos petites choses pour l'amour du ciel."

She turned as she spoke to a tall and very meagre gentleman whose spare form, tightly buttoned in an overcoat, had hitherto occupied an unobtrusive position in the rear. He now advanced, taking no manner of notice of his energetic spouse, to extend a limp hand to Juliet, and then passing her with a bow, proceeded to the first landing, where he bestowed a similar greeting on Mr. Lennox.

When and where Count and Countess de Galphi had first come across each other was a

mystery to all their acquaintances. The Countess, who belonged by birth to a good old family of the North of England, had led a roving life for many years before she suddenly astonished her family and friends by appearing with a foreign husband in tow. Some people said he had been starving in an attic when she had taken compassion on him; others that he had disguised himself as a courier in order to obtain access to her; others on the contrary indignantly protested against such surmises, and asserted that the match had been made up by the English ambassador in Rome or in Vienna. The Countess herself maintained a discreet silence on the subject and her spouse was absolutely impenetrable. That he had no money was evident; it was also clear to the most suspicious that he was a harmless creature, dignified after his own unobtrusive fashion, easily pleased, and devoted to his lively, good-natured wife. His very nationality was, however, shrouded in mystery; presumably the Countess knew from what soil he had sprung, but she did not deem it necessary apparently to take the world into her confidence. Once or twice she had alluded to his pedigree, dropped a hint of the "Almanach de Gotha," and asserted with some heat that she could never have looked at any man

who had not at least seize quartiers. She addressed him indifferently in French, German, and Italian of the same execrable quality, while he responded invariably in an English that was uniformly bad, but which occasionally became entertaining from a certain originality which he managed to introduce into it. Thus on being presently introduced to Horace Bulkeley, and on observing that the latter held between his fingers the smouldering end of a cigar, he drew a cigarette from his own pocket and inquired politely:

"Might I incommode you for the fire?"

And Horace stared for a moment before he realised that the query was another form of the conventional one: "May I trouble you for a light?"

"Now venez, venez, Ignace, es ist jetzt Mahlzeit. Wir essen um ein Uhr, nicht wahr? une heure. Keep a table next you, Juliet. Garçon," shrilly over the balusters to the waiter, "Kellner, nous désirons garder une table à côté de ce Monsieur et cette jeune dame."

"Bitte?" said the poor little boy waiter appealingly from the foot of the stairs. He had picked up a little English, but French was not included in the curriculum of the Schöne Aussicht; and even if it had been, it

is doubtful if he would have understood the Countess's peculiar idiom.

"Dear me, what a stupid little fellow! Ich will ein Tisch halten ganz nahe zu dieser Herr — verstehen Sie? — zwei Tischen zusammen — so."

The Professor came mournfully downstairs. Countess de Galphi was one of his oldest friends, and he was exceedingly fond of her, but in his present mood he considered her visit inopportune; and the close proximity at meals for which she had so thoughtfully provided filled him with dismay. As he was crossing the hall her voice came cheerfully down to him from the flight above:

"You see we're going to have war with Russia at last."

"What?" cried Mr. Lennox, with a start of surprise.

"Oh, yes. I saw it in the paper to-day — got one on my way up from the station. I always knew it was coming, didn't you?"

"But I read the *Times* through this morning," protested Horace, recovering in some measure from the stupor into which the announcement had thrown him, "and there was nothing of the kind in it. The German papers must have got hold of some cock and bull story."

"It was an English paper, though," returned the Countess, with a kind of gloomy triumph from her upper landing. "I always make a point of getting an Englische Zeitung immediately on arriving at a new place. I'll send it down to the dining room, and you can see it for yourselves."

Presently, indeed, the Professor, effectually roused from the abstracted mood which had recently become almost habitual to him, was eagerly scanning one sheet of a certain aggressively Radical organ, while Bulkeley searched the columns of the other; but neither could discover the disturbing item of intelligence in question.

They were still pursuing this fruitless quest when the Countess and her husband joined them.

"Can't find it!" she ejaculated, as they both fell upon her with aggrieved complaints. "Well, you must be dull. But men never do see things that are actually under their noses. N'est-ce pas, Ignace, je dis toujours que vous ne voyez jamais ce qui est sous votre nez? Give me the Zeitung."

She glanced at the page, popped her finger on a certain spot, and handed it triumphantly back to Mr. Lennox.

"There, you see, I found it in a minute."

"Where?"

"There in the middle of that long thing, '*A Forecast of the Future*.' Don't you see they say we are certain to have war with Russia before long?"

The Professor threw down the sheet with a laugh that was half irate and half amused.

"It is plain enough, I think," cried the old lady, jubilantly, "I always felt it was coming, as I say, and if you ask me I think we shall probably have a thorough good beating. Things are looking very black for us all round, it seems to me."

The Professor laid down his knife and fork and gazed at her more in sorrow than in anger for a moment or two, after which he proceeded to demonstrate to her at great length and with no little heat how impossible it would be — even if the prognostics of some irresponsible scribblers were fulfilled, which was *most* unlikely — for the greatness of England ever to be diminished by so much as a tittle or for her defenders to prove unequal to any emergency.

Countess de Galphi sustained her share of the argument with equal energy, and retained throughout the spirit of cheerful pessimism which appeared to be characteristic of her.

Horace occasionally joined in, but was little noticed by either of the disputants until some chance allusion of his drew the lady's attention to himself.

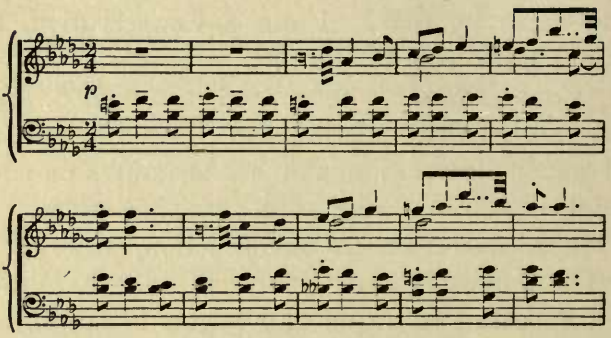
"My Radical tenets!" she cried, "what do you mean by that? I am a Conservative, I would have you to know."

"Conservative!" he echoed, astonished, for she had been enunciating theories of the most advanced description, and her strictures on existing conditions were of a sweeping order.

"Yes," she returned with conviction, "*strong!*"

Thereupon Horace collapsed, and the Professor ceased to argue and began to laugh.

CHAPTER XIII



THOUGH the advent of the Countess de Galphi brought with it an element of cheerful bustle, exhilarating to Juliet if somewhat disturbing to her father and his friend, after the first day or two things returned more or less to their normal groove. The Professor again became silent and abstracted, parrying with polite brevity the old lady's perpetual efforts to draw him out, and confining his own contributions to the conversation to an occasional remark to Horace on some subject too abstruse for ordinary comprehension.

One day, after watching him with uncon-

cealed disapproval for some time, the Countess suddenly startled him by exclaiming:

"Well, I don't wonder that Juliet looks dull and *triste*. Poor child, what is to become of her when I go I can't think."

Juliet looked up with a start.

"I am not dull, I assure you. I am quite happy here; of course I shall miss you dreadfully, but still—"

"Don't talk nonsense, my dear. Anyone can see you are moped to death; what young creature wouldn't be! And you don't look a bit well either. As I said to my husband when we first arrived, 'Cette enfant a perdu ses roses'—n'est-ce pas, Ignace, j'ai dit que Mademoiselle ici avait perdu ses roses? And so she has! I wonder you don't notice it, Professor. The child is as pasty as possible, and quite black under the eyes."

"I always thought this place suited Juliet," returned Mr. Lennox with dignity. "She has frequently assured me that she liked it immensely, and it seemed to me that she was looking particularly well."

"Look at her now, then," returned the Countess, "and tell me if she appears robust. Her face is about the size of a threepenny bit, to begin with! She has lost all her spirits too—

anyone can see that. Nicht wahr, Ignace, das Kind ist nicht so lustig als sie war? Wir haben es oft gesagt, nicht?"

The Count paused to allow the meaning of his wife's words to penetrate to his brain: a needful precaution; for though it was one of her peculiarities to use on all occasions a foreign tongue in preference to her own, she demonstrated another phase of her somewhat erratic conservatism by adhering rigorously to the British pronunciation of most vowels and consonants.

It was probably some sudden inspiration on his own part which enabled the good fellow to grasp at length her purport, whereupon, turning towards Juliet with an expression of respectful sympathy, he remarked, as usual in English:

"It is true that the young Meess seem to have lost her colours, and that she appear no longer so enjoy."

Under other circumstances the Professor would have been amused at this quaint rendering of the word "enjouée," but now he was too much disturbed at the announcement to note the phraseology. He, too, turned to Juliet with a startled look, and beckoned.

"Come here, child. Tell me, are you not well? Let me feel your pulse."

"No use doing that. Ce n'est pas en sentant le pouls que vous saurez combien elle est ennuyée, pauvre petite. She wants a change. Would you like to come with me to the cemetery on Sunday and see all the smart people put flowers on the graves? I always go. The first Sunday in November is a great day here. The fashionable folk drive up by hundreds with white Kranzen and pots of beautiful Blumen, and they make the graves look so bright and nice. We could have tea at a café afterwards — it will be a nice little outing. You would like it, would you not?"

Juliet did not answer, but her father felt her shiver within his encircling arm. He himself was beginning some indignant protest when he suddenly caught sight of tears glistening in her eyes, and stopped in consternation. Thereupon the girl made some faltering excuse, broke down, and finally, releasing herself from his embrace, ran out of the room.

"What can it mean?" he exclaimed blankly. "I have never known her lose her self-control like this. She must be really ill! How blind I have been not to have noticed it. I must go after her — I must —"

"Now just leave her alone for a few minutes, my good man, if you can do anything so sensible.

You have been blind certainly — as blind as a bat — but she isn't a bit ill. She is only triste. Here she is isolée sur une montagne, au fonds des bois, — rien pour l'égayer que des feuilles mortes. No companions but two *savongs* who can talk of nothing more cheerful than centrifugal forces and primary instincts and that kind of thing. Yes, Professor, I am very angry with you; you pay no more attention to that charming child than if she were a stock or a stone."

"I own," said the old man in a nettled tone, "that it would not have occurred to me to propose a visit to the churchyard as a means of restoring cheerfulness."

"At least she would have been brought in contact with human nature," retorted the Countess, stoutly. "Human nature alive or dead is better than your old dry-as-dust theories."

"Juliet has always expressed interest in my work," this very stiffly. "She has, moreover, frequently assured me that she delighted in the woods — "

"Not in their present dripping state, je parie," cried his adversary.

"She seemed amused and pleased with the life here," he continued, disregarding the interruption.

"When there were a few more people in the place, perhaps. I don't believe you know the difference between summer and winter — vous avez toujours la tête dans les nuages, vous savez. But the facts speak for themselves. Mr. Bulkeley, I appeal to you. Can this draughty, mouldy, melancholy place offer any attractions now to a young girl? Mr. *Bulkeley*," reaching across the table to poke him with a plump finger, "do you hear me?"

"I beg your pardon!" he exclaimed, emerging with a start from what seemed a somewhat gloomy reverie. "You are quite right. There is nothing — nothing here now which could possibly interest Miss Lennox."

"You ought to take her away at once," pursued Countess de Galphi, inexorably. "Take her home and let her have some hunting before the frost sets in. With a groom, you know — she would be all right with a groom."

"To Moor's Hill?" queried the Professor, aghast.

"Why not? Well, to Paris if you like it better. Yes, do take her to Paris and let her rub up her French. She is not so fond of speaking French as I should wish her to be. I often notice that when I purposely speak French to her she answers in English."

"But my work!" gasped Mr. Lennox; "if I am again disturbed I shall be thrown back for months. I am only beginning to get into swing. I had intended," looking blankly round, "to remain here during the winter."

"Now, you mustn't be so selfish," cried the old lady. "What does it matter about your work — you've got plenty of money. If you keep that girl here during the winter it will be a crying shame. Even my husband notices how poorly Juliet is looking, and he is not at all an observant person. Je dis, mon ami, que tu n'es pas observant, mais que tu trouves que Juliet n'a pas l'air du tout forte."

After the customary interval for assimilation the gentleman responded mournfully that he had indeed remarked that Mees had a bad air lately. "Did you not observe," he added mysteriously, bending towards the perturbed father, "when my wife speak to her first she rouged and then she teared — she was in fact quite set-up."

Mr. Lennox cast a look of helpless consternation towards Bulkeley, and the latter roused himself in response to the mute appeal.

"Some compromise may surely be hit upon," he said, smiling. "It should not be very difficult to devise a plan which would suit all parties.

Professor Lennox wishes to remain here for at least another month or two. Why should he not do so? On the other hand, there is no reason why Miss Lennox, whom the place evidently does not agree with at this time of year, should not pass the interval elsewhere — in visiting friends, for instance," he added, looking suggestively at the Countess de Galphi.

"What a capital idea!" cried she, clapping her hands, "and how stupid of me not to have thought of it. I will carry her off with me, and we'll have a grand frisk together. I'll take her to Stättingen — she shall go to operas and concerts, and have German lessons and all sorts of things. Now, Professor, there's your difficulty solved."

"But," said he, doubtfully, "Juliet has never been separated from me in her life. I don't think she will consent to go."

"She must go!" cried the lady.

"She really ought to go!" murmured Bulkeley, while even the Count chimed in with an unusually energetic expression of opinion.

And so between them they talked the Professor round, and when he presently summoned Juliet to impart to her the proposal, his mind was made up. In vain did the girl plead and protest; it generally took some time for Mr.

Lennox to come to a decision of the kind, but once thoroughly convinced of its advisability it was impossible subsequently to shake him. Juliet therefore found she must prepare to face the inevitable and was somewhat consoled when Horace Bulkeley, drawing her aside on the first opportunity, told her hurriedly that he himself intended to remain over Christmas at the Schöne Aussicht, and would take care of her father and send her frequent reports of his health and spirits.

"How good of you!" she cried gratefully. "You are staying on purpose to look after him."

"It is a privilege," said Horace. "And after all, when a man is as lonely as I am it does not matter much where he spends his Christmas."

The smile which accompanied these words quite transfigured his honest, plain face, and Juliet smiled back confidently and brightly, congratulating herself on the thought of leaving her father in the care of this devoted disciple. Only once again did she demur at the proposed plan, and that was when some allusion was made to the pleasures which she might expect to find at Stättingen.

"I wish it had been any other place but Stättingen," she murmured, half under her

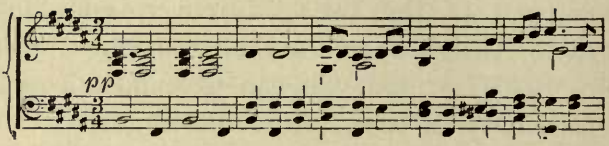
breath. "I thought Countess de Galphi spoke of going to Dresden."

"Now, Juliet, you are unreasonable," said her father. "You have not seen either of these places, and Stättingen is the gayer and more important of the two. Moreover, your first visit to Austria should make an epoch in your life. Confess that you can give no adequate reason for your objection to Stättingen."

She shook her head: even to her father she could not have explained that the idea of visiting Stättingen was repugnant to her solely because of the association of the place with Christian Thal.

PART II

CHAPTER I



STÄTTINGEN! Gay, bright, delightful Stättingen, with its gabled and painted roofs, tall houses ornamented with many a quaint design, oriel windows and covered balconies jutting out wherever the fancy took them; its odd mixture of broad streets, and dark winding alleys, its noble river, its countless churches, its treasures of art, its endless bustle and chatter and laughter. No wonder Juliet's head was well-nigh turned by the charm of the place. For the first few days she could do nothing but gaze about her; it seemed to her that the life of the streets was of itself all-sufficient in its interest and gaiety. The carts and cabs dashing past, many of them drawn in somewhat casual fashion by a single horse harnessed to one side of the pole, but accompanied by what jingling of bells and cracking of whips and

shouting of jocular drivers — how unlike were these volatile Austrians to the phlegmatic folk of Schönwald! Then, the more imposing equipages of the aristocrats with their magnificent Hungarian horses, the liveries of the servants being now in the extreme of English fashion, now of the many-braided, many-buttoned order denoting a Magyar household; the bright shops, the beautifully clad lady pedestrians, the tight-waisted, mustachioed officers spick and span in their marvellous uniforms — the very street-vendors in their varied costumes — all were new and delightful to watch.

After a few days the party were settled in a small flat on the ground-floor of a tall, newly-built house in a somewhat unfashionable quarter of the town. Life with the Countess de Galphi was certain to be varied and original, and Juliet found no small amusement in the unconventional little shifts and contrivances by which the good lady managed to eke out a not very enormous income. The motley collection of stores in the dining-room cupboard, selected and brought home by themselves, and comprising every conceivable requirement from foie gras to linseed meal, entertained her excessively; the little travelling tea apparatus which was daily set forth and subsequently washed up

by her own hands, appeared to her a marvel of comprehensive ingenuity; the boiling up of their morning coffee on a spirit lamp; the running out to the pastry-cook's to supplement a defective supply of rolls — all was to Juliet, the pampered child of fortune, full of piquant novelty. She knew that her father had taken care that her visit should put her kind entertainers to no expense, and meanwhile she was much interested and diverted by a mode of life so unlike that to which she had been accustomed. Even the Countess's occasional appearance at the morning meal without her hair and attired in a most unprepossessing négligé, and the Count's invariable practice of cleaving to dressing-gown and slippers until mid-day, did not disconcert her. As for the dinners at out-of-the-way restaurants, the scrambling suppers after concert or play, — the viands being frequently brought home in paper bags from the pastry-cook's and partaken of by the light of a solitary candle, — well, they all formed part of the cheery, irregular, Bohemian existence, and were therefore to be appreciated. Juliet was interested in everything and in everybody; in Lena the young wife of the portier, and her pale, sickly baby; in her fellow lodgers whom she occasionally met upon the stone stairs. Herr

Dr. Prutt and his newly-made wife lived on the first floor. Juliet often saw the little bride peering anxiously forth from between the lace curtains of her sitting room, and told herself that she was watching for patients. The Herr Doctor did not seem to have many patients as yet. Juliet wove quite a romance about the anxious little wife and the pale young doctor, and often found herself unconsciously hoping that this or that passer-by, who seemed to be slackening his pace as he approached the house, might be thinking of consulting the Medicin-Arzt. An elderly lawyer occupied the flat immediately opposite the de Galphis', and men and women of various denominations found refuge on the upper flights.

Only one of these appeared to Juliet in the slightest degree interesting. A tall, round-shouldered youth with shaggy black hair always tumbling into his eyes — these eyes alone atoning by their luminousness and intelligence for the plainness of his sallow face.

Once or twice as he came swinging past Juliet he hummed a tune to himself, and occasionally she fancied she heard the muffled notes of a distant piano.

"Ja wohl," said Lena, when questioned on this point. "There is a piano in the house —

right up there in the garret. It belongs to Herr Michotte, the young Frenchman, whom the Hochgeborenes Fräulein might have noticed — he with the black eyes who is always singing. Yes, he is lustig, the Herr Michotte, though often there is no fire da oben, and many a time the poor young fellow goes without his dinner, of that she felt sure."

And then Juliet felt even more sorry for the young Herr Michotte than for Dr. Prutt, who at least dined every day, as was testified by the appetising savours that came floating down from his apartment about one o'clock. A little before seven one memorable evening, Juliet and her friends sallied forth for the first time to the opera-house. They proceeded on foot, as is the custom in Stättingen, cloaks protecting their sober morning dress, and lace kerchiefs covering the ladies' heads. Count de Galphi walked between his wife and Juliet, giving an arm to each, and was quite brilliant as he discoursed of the powers of the Prima Donna and of her unsurpassed rendering of "du holder Abendstern."

Juliet almost danced along, and could hardly restrain from jerking her conductor's arm in her anxiety to make him go faster; her eyes were shining like stars under her white head-

gear. The Countess on her side talked as usual, nineteen to the dozen in a variety of languages, her little high-heeled shoes went *tock-tock* along the pavement and were freely displayed, as was also a good deal of black silk stocking, beneath her carefully tucked-up skirts. All were in the highest good humour when they found themselves in the arcade leading to the opera-house, and after threading the interminable passages and mounting the handsome stairs were at length inducted into their box.

"I was determined you should do it properly the first time, at any rate," cried the Countess. "There is nothing like a box. Half one's pleasure is spoilt if one happens to have a disagreeable neighbour. I am sure I am glad of it to-night. Heavens, what a lot of Jews! I do dislike Jews. Well, this is comfortable — and so cheap too — twenty-one kronen, would you believe it? And there's that nice little sort of anteroom where we can go and sit between the acts."

But her remarks fell unheeded: the overture had already begun, and Juliet was listening spell-bound. She had never been to an opera in her life, and seen thus under particularly happy auspices one may imagine the glamour of this new experience. When the curtain fell

after the first act she still sat with dilated eyes and flushed cheeks gazing towards the stage.

"I believe you think the curtain will go up quicker if you sit staring at it," said the Countess, shrugging her shoulders. "Well, I'm going to this snug little anteroom to rest my eyes. I am sure there is not much to be seen unless you like looking round at all these Jew faces. There's a girl down there quite bald, I do declare. She doesn't know we can see the top of her head. Voyez, Ignace, une jeune dame qui est chauve."

But Ignace had already retired to the anteroom, where his spouse presently joined him, and Juliet was left to watch the drop-scene in peace.

But by-and-bye she felt herself impelled to look upwards. Her eyes, drawn by that strange magnetism produced by the earnest scrutiny of other eyes, were lifted, past the tiers of boxes, past the gallery above, up, up to the highest row of all, where they suddenly fixed themselves upon a face that stood out for a moment amid a crowd of other faces, and then — was gone.

Juliet sat still, gazing with strained eagerness at the place where it had been; but presently she rubbed her eyes.

It was fancy, she said to herself. It was scarcely possible to distinguish anyone at such a distance; she had been momentarily deceived by a chance resemblance. And yet — she had not been thinking of Christian Thal; why was it that for a brief space before the sudden rush of blood had made her head swim, it had seemed to her that he was there, looking down at her with a white intent face?

She leaned back in her chair with a sigh; the glamour of the place seemed to have faded; her head ached, the air had become heavy and stifling. Idly she watched the members of the orchestra come strolling back to their places, feeling none of the keen excitement with which, had it not been for the recent incident, she would have hailed this indication of their approaching resumption of duty. The door of the next box opened and there was a murmured colloquy and a laugh from one of the Israelitish ladies. Juliet did not turn her head; she did not even look round when in another moment there was a knock at the door of their own box and she heard the Countess de Galphi say "Entrez" — the formula which she preferably used in England or Germany. Some vendor of ices was probably endeavouring to dispose of his wares. In another moment, how-

ever, Juliet was roused from her apathy by a summons from the Countess.

"Juliet, this gentleman says he is a friend of yours."

She turned quickly enough now. It was Christian Thal. He stood in the doorway, his eyes shining, his face radiant with smiles. Had he ever been unkind? Surely she had but dreamed it! With two strides he was at her side, and now her hand was in his and he was telling her over and over again how glad he was to see her and how surprised, and how he had hardly believed his eyes when first he had caught sight of her.

"But I knew I could not be mistaken," he cried. "There could not be another Juliet Lennox in the world."

His hand still held hers, his eyes were dilated, glowing — he made no attempt to conceal the fact that he was bubbling over with delight at their meeting, yet somehow at his confident air Juliet felt a momentary return of anger. She drew away her hand and looked at him gravely.

"I am sometimes tempted to think," she said, in the formal tone which was an unconscious echo of her father's, "I am sometimes tempted to think that there are two Christian Thals."

He stared at her for a moment and then laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"One the artist, and one the man?" he inquired.

"Does that account for it?" said she, still coldly.

A sudden light appeared to break in on him; his face grew serious, even moody.

"I can explain all that," he said in a low voice; and then stopped short, for at this moment the orchestra struck up and the Countess and her husband returned to their seats.

"Will you not introduce me?" said Christian. There was an empty place behind Juliet's chair, and as he spoke he looked at it meaningly. Madame de Galphi intercepted the glance and her eyes twinkled. She was the soul of good nature and liked nothing so much, as she frequently averred, as to see young things happy. As Christian happened to be a particularly attractive specimen of a young thing, and as, moreover, Juliet's eager face unconsciously endorsed the unspoken petition, the old lady, who had a fine scent for romance coupled with a characteristic disregard of consequences, shook hands warmly with her new acquaintance and invited him to join the party. The

curtain had risen and now new wonders began to unfold and Juliet looked and listened all the more entranced because of the proximity of her friend and the happy consciousness of restored confidence. Meanwhile Christian devoted himself almost exclusively to watching her; the absorbed face, the small bent head, the slender clasped hands. Ah! there was only one Juliet — there should be only one Christian too.

Once she tossed back the golden tress of hair which fell over her shoulder without perceiving that for a moment the silken ends of it rested on Christian's hands, which hung over the back of her chair as he sat bending forward. He looked at it, hardly daring to breathe. How fine it was, how soft — it seemed to hold the light as it lay there. In another moment she moved slightly and it slipped away from him. At the close of the act the Countess bounced up and propelled her husband before her into the anteroom.

"Those children want to talk to each other," she said in her worst German as he was about to protest. "They won't say a word if we are there."

The Count, shrugging his shoulders, insinuated that it was not perhaps quite wise.

"Sit down," cried the lady, "and ne gâtez pas le sport."

Meanwhile Juliet, whom this manœuvre of her friend's had thrown into sudden confusion, was silent for a moment or two, and then, taking courage, looked Christian full in the face.

"I want to hear you explain," she said.

He did not look at her, but she could see that he was breathing quickly.

"Ask," he said, after a pause.

Juliet forgot her transitory perturbation, and leaning back in her chair gazed at him with the air of a young judge.

"The day before you left," she began in a low voice, "the stormy day, do you remember?"

He bowed his head and she thought she saw him shudder.

"You were playing," she went on; "you were playing Chopin's 'Storm Study.' I stood outside and listened, and when you had finished I turned the handle of the door."

"It was locked," said Christian, laconically.

"Yes, it was locked, but you must have heard me. Did you know that it was I?"

He nodded.

"Well, I think that requires a little explanation," said Juliet, once more in unconscious mimicry of her father's judicial tone.

"The explanation is — that the key was in Annola's pocket." Those fine, thin nostrils of his were still rising and falling rapidly, but he had lifted his eyes and it seemed to Juliet that they were faintly twinkling.

"Could you not at least have said so?" she cried with gathering wrath.

"I was in a very bad temper, you see."

"I do not think that is any excuse for being rude to me."

"I am very sorry."

There was no twinkle in the eyes now; but they looked more gloomy than penitent.

"Annola does not want me to be happy," he said, and suddenly dropped his chin in his hands.

"Did she insist on taking you away then?"

He nodded.

"But surely she did not forbid you to say good-bye?"

He unclasped his hands and sat upright.

"No, it was I who would not say good-bye."

"And do you not think it was — it was —" her voice shook and she turned away her head.

"Do not let us speak of it now," he cried, impulsively, "let us be happy. I mean to be happy, one has but one youth, after all."

Juliet did not look towards him; he could hear her little shoe tapping on the floor. He

edged round his chair, bending forward so that she was forced to look at him.

"Forgive me," he whispered. "As you said, there were two Christian Thals in those days — the artist and the man. The artist belonged to Annola before — now it shall belong to the man. There shall be only one Christian."

"Well, I hope he will be nice," said Juliet, and she began to laugh.

"It is time for me to go in, I think," said the Countess, craning her head round the partition. "That young fellow is actually sitting in her pocket."

Christian discreetly pushed back his chair and stood up as she entered, and was immediately put through a catechism as to his age, occupation, and prospects in life.

She was much interested in his replies, which were delivered with affability and ease, and presently dropped into a dissertation on musical matters to which he listened with no small amusement. After descanting on the merits of Weber, Wagner, and Strauss, all of whom she included in the same category, and all of whose names she pronounced in her own whole-hearted, British fashion, she announced that she would like to hear Christian play.

"But nothing is easier," cried he, delighted.

"I will come and play to you to-morrow — any day. Where are you staying?"

She gave the address, but added, somewhat disconsolately, that she had no piano.

"Ah, but wait a little," cried he, eagerly, "Ludwig Strasse, 45, you say? What luck! A friend of mine lodges in the same house. He lives in a garret, but he has got a lovely piano. I can easily arrange it all. Bobo will be charmed."

"Is Bobo your friend's name?" inquired the Countess, disapprovingly.

"Well, his real name is Prospèr Michotte, but he is always called Bobo. Most of our students are given little names, you see — little friendly names — and we call him Bobo, because he has always got something the matter with him — earache, or toothache, or a cut finger — 'un petit bobo,' he says, with such a doleful face — so we call him Bobo."

"And have they any name for you?" put in Juliet.

"Yes, they call me Cæsar, because I want to conquer the world."

"Don't be too ambitious," said Madame de Galphi, severely. "La fierté a eu un tombeau — une chute, I mean. Much better begin by having a humble opinion of yourself."

Christian smiled benignly, but made no direct response, observing however, after a pause, that he would hunt up Bobo at once, and would, if possible, play for the Countess on the morrow.

On emerging from the box the Count carefully cloaked his wife, tied on her muffler, and insisted on inserting two pellets of cotton-wool in her ears; after which he turned to Juliet, who had however already accepted Christian's assistance, and whom that young gentleman was now preparing to pilot downstairs.

The Count, after a momentary pause of astonishment, proceeded to don his own great-coat and to pad his own ears.

On reaching the street he was about to offer Juliet his spare arm, when he discovered that Christian was already briskly stepping away with her. He looked down at his wife, but observing no appearance of alarm on her cheerful countenance, dismissed with a slight shrug his momentary qualms.

So the young folks threaded their way gaily through the broad, well-lighted streets of the beautiful city, and made the usual remarks of young people under such circumstances about the calm night and the clear sky and the stars. They had left the fashionable quarter of the

town and were making their way through narrower and less frequented streets, when all at once Christian, pointing out two figures in front of them, cried gaily:

"I am sure that is Bobo; I should know his old round back anywhere. We can arrange about our little séance at once. Bobo! Hola! Bobo!"

The round-shouldered youth turned, as did also the little lady clinging to his arm, and immediately both hastened up to Christian.

"Happy meeting!" cried Thal in French. "Bobo, you are the very person I want. Let me present you at once to my friend Miss Juliet Lennox. Rosie," turning to the little lady, "you would also like to make acquaintance, would you not? Miss Juliet Lennox — Miss Rosie Gordon. Bobo, my dear friend, we want your piano to-morrow. I am coming to play in your room at half past ten o'clock."

"Parfaitement," said Bobo, good-humouredly; "but say rather eleven, mon cher. The diabolical Mädchen can never manage to make my bed before that hour."

Meanwhile Rosie Gordon had tilted back her blond, tam-o'-shanter-crowned head, and was staring at Juliet with a pair of blue eyes that looked very bright in the light of the street

lamp. She was quite young and had a pretty pink-and-white face with a little cocked nose.

"Are you also going to study under the Maestro?" she asked.

"Oh, no," returned Juliet, "I am not clever enough for that. I am only staying here for a little while."

"I thought I had not seen you at the classes," returned Miss Gordon.

Meanwhile Monsieur Prospèr Michotte, clutching his friend's sleeve, had announced in a stage whisper that some mysterious "she" was divine.

In another moment the Count and Countess came jogging up, rather out of breath; introductions were gone through, and arrangements finally made for the musical performance on the morrow.

Then the pretty Rosie and her cavalier pursued their way, and the rest of the party walked on together, soon arriving at their destination.

Christian stood looking at the house for a moment after Juliet had disappeared and then began to waltz down the street, tossing up his hat and catching it again with great dexterity as he twirled. Presently he collided with an old gentleman who uttered an astonished

"Behüte!" Christian bowed and apologised with great suavity, put on his hat with a flourish, and continued his progress after a more rational manner.

His face, however, still wore so unaccustomed an expression of exhilaration and excitement that Annola, whose door opened noiselessly as he passed, started at sight of him.

"What is the matter, Christian? You are late — what have you been doing?"

"I have been escaping from the Hörselberg," he returned with sudden gravity; and as she stared at him he began to sing under his breath:

> "Doch ich aus diesen ros' gen Duften
> Verlange nach des Waldes Luften
> Nach unseres Himmels klarem Blau" —

Annola set down her light and opened her door more widely.

"What is the matter with you to-night?" she cried suspiciously. "It is not possible that — you have been drinking."

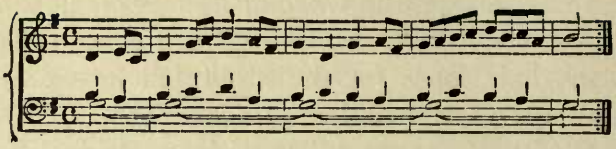
"I am, as you can see, intoxicated," returned he, and took up his chant at another point. "I have escaped, I tell you, from the Venusberg," he resumed presently, "I am a free man — free and young. Have I not reason to be intoxicated?"

She came out into the passage and laid her hands on his shoulders. Her figure looked thin and frail in a cotton dressing-gown, which was, it must be owned, none of the cleanest; her face, haggard in the dim light, wore at that moment its most unpleasing expression; her black hair, loose for the night, fell heavy and lank upon her shoulders.

Christian surveyed her with marked disfavour: perhaps he was thinking of the shining silky tress that had for a moment fallen across his hands.

"*You* are not very like Venus, Annola!" he cried with a little laugh, and, pushing her aside, went to his room, still singing.

CHAPTER II



THE first person whom Juliet encountered on the following morning was Prospèr Michotte. He was emerging from the porter's room and at sight of her backed diffidently against the wall. She nodded gaily and passed on, but not before she had observed that he was carrying a small, a very small shovelful of coals. Many of these fell clattering on the floor as he made way for her, and when presently, unable to resist the temptation of watching him, she peeped out through a chink of the door, she discovered him on his knees carefully picking them up even to the smallest fragment, and her heart smote her at this evidence of his preparations for the coming entertainment, remembering, as she did, Lena's remark that he seldom had a fire for himself.

Later on she again came across him carrying a pot containing a shrivelled and dusty

plant of the laurel kind which he had presumably borrowed from Lena, for her voice pursued him with shrill injunctions to be careful of her property, and on no account to let the pot fall. He greeted Juliet this time with a bashful smile, remarking that everything would soon be ready, and that he was indeed honoured at the prospect of entertaining her and her friend.

A little before the appointed hour Christian came to pay his respects to the Countess, whom he found very alert, and primed with fresh curiosity.

"Who was that young person who was with your friend, Mr. Bobo, last night?"

"That was Rosie Gordon. Some of the English pupils call her Dumpling, but I never do — the name is not pretty enough for her."

"Is she any relative of your friend's?"

"No, certainly not. Rosie is a Scotchwoman."

"Are they fiancés, then?"

"No, I don't think Rosie is engaged to anyone just now. Bobo was engaged last year, but the girl has gone away."

"Is he in love with Miss Gordon, then?"

"Ah, you ask because he was seeing her home last night? That means nothing, you

know. They had been to the Symphony Concert, you see. Oh, they always see each other home. But he may be in love with her — he is always in love with somebody."

"Juliet, my dear," said the Countess, with mock severity, "you must be careful or he will perhaps devote his affections to you."

"No, he shall not," cried Christian, eagerly, as he saw Juliet redden and frown. "The idea displeases you, does it not? I will not allow it — I will tell him he must not think of it. He must go on being in love with Rosie."

At this moment there came a tap at the door, which on being cautiously opened admitted the head and a portion of the diffident person of Mr. Bobo himself. He bowed all round, blushed furiously, and timidly invited Christian to come upstairs, and see if all was arranged to his liking. Christian obligingly complied, and a vast deal of gallopading up and down stairs ensued, accompanied by whispering and stifled laughter before he reappeared breathless to announce that everything was ready.

Now came an apparently interminable progress up these same stairs, the Countess being obliged to halt twice and to prop herself against an angle of the wall for a short breathing space.

On one of these occasions Juliet chanced to look up just in time to see a shaggy black head disappearing behind the balusters, while immediately afterwards rapid steps were heard retreating upwards. She knew by the twinkle in Christian's eye that he too had taken note of the circumstance, but he made no remark and appeared to be absorbed in attending to the Countess.

"Does that little girl Dumpling — Pudding, whatever you call her — play well?" panted that lady, resuming the conversation which had been interrupted a short time before.

"Rosie? Yes, she has a very pretty talent," returned Rosie's fellow-pupil condescendingly. "She can do almost everything with those little cushioned hands of hers."

The faint sound of a cough floating from the upper regions suggested his next inquiry.

"Would you like to take my arm while we go on?"

"No, thanks, you might go too fast — besides I want to hold up my petticoats. You young folks had better go on first and let me follow at my leisure."

He stood aside to let Juliet pass, and skipped joyfully after her while the Countess de Galphi mounted laboriously in her own peculiar fash-

ion, which necessitated the planting of both feet firmly on each step before another could be ascended. She was far behind when Juliet and Christian arrived on the top landing, where, contrary to the girl's expectation, no one was waiting to receive them.

Preceding her along the passage, Christian tapped ceremoniously at one of the closed doors and was politely bidden to enter.

Bobo, who had been seated by the stove, book in hand, rose with great alacrity and bade them welcome.

"I was, as you see, awaiting you," he remarked with a gracious smile.

Remembering the gallopading up and down stairs and the vanishing black head, Juliet found it a little difficult to simulate belief in Monsieur Prospèr's attitude of passive expectation.

Before she could speak, however, Christian drew his friend hastily on one side.

"Malheureux, there are but two chairs! I shall need one at the piano. Do you expect, then, one of these ladies to stand?"

Bobo, much depressed, made some inaudible rejoinder, and Juliet, watching him out of the corner of her eye, fancied that she detected a sideways jerk of his head in the direction of the bed in one corner of the room.

"Impossible!" rejoined Thal in the same scandalised undertone. "What are you thinking of? It does not look in the least like a sofa. It would be to the last degree inconvenant. Now here is the Countess who arrives. Ah ça, mon cher, it is not you who have shown ésprit. Make some excuse; entertain these ladies for a few minutes until I return."

He darted out of the room just as the rotund figure of the Countess appeared in the doorway.

Michotte came forward much crestfallen to receive her, and nervously proposed that the ladies should just — just make the round of the room to give themselves an idea of how artists lived. The tour of inspection could not indeed last long, for this garret of Bobo's was very tiny. It had a sloping roof, and one or two odd bulges in the white-washed walls, and a minute rusty stove in one corner from which little puffs of smoke occasionally came forth, denoting, as it seemed to Juliet, how seldom it was used. The little pallet bed bore certainly no most remote resemblance to a sofa though possibly Bobo had hoped to convey this effect by placing a pillow discreetly covered with a red cotton handkerchief at each end; there were two chairs, a very small table — and a cottage piano.

"Have you seen my flowers?" inquired the

proprietor of the apartment in an insinuating voice.

On the top of the piano was a tiny glass vase holding a bunch of violets, which looked very like those worn by Christian on first arriving.

Juliet remembered having observed that on his second appearance his buttonhole was empty.

"How sweet they are!" she said, bending down to smell them.

"Ah, the violets? I did not mean them — I meant — have you seen these?"

Countess de Galphi and Juliet turned simultaneously, and approached the table where Bobo stood pointing out with an air of modest pride a peculiar looking object in the centre. Elevated on a pile of books, the pot draped with a red cotton handkerchief similar to those which decorated the pillows, was Lena's sickly laurel, the dingy foliage of which was, however, enlivened by orange blooms of a kind unknown to botanists.

"What in the world is it?" exclaimed the Countess. "I never saw such a thing. Where did you get it? I do believe the leaves are real — but what on earth are these yellow things supposed to be?"

"They are camellias," explained Bobo, his face falling. "Do you not think they look like camellias?" he added anxiously. "They always said I made them so well."

"But what are they — wax? No, they are quite sticky. Who ever saw orange camellias, I wonder! What a funny smell they have."

"They are made of carrot," said Bobo, mournfully. "I sat up till midnight cutting them out with my penknife. They are better when they are made of turnip," he conceded, "but I could not get a turnip. Lena was just going to put this into the soup, but I coaxed her to —"

At this moment a curious sound, as of a miniature battering-ram at the door, diverted their attention from Bobo's original floral decorations, and that young gentleman flew to admit Christian, much out of breath and carrying, legs uppermost, a large office-stool — presumably the lawyer's.

"I had to go to the ground floor for this," he grumbled. "And now it is too high for the piano. But perhaps," looking appealingly at Juliet, "Miss Lennox would not mind sitting on it. You will have all the better view of my hands," he added as an inducement.

Juliet climbed on to her high perch, and the Countess took possession of one of the chairs;

Bobo officiously hastened to place the other in readiness for his friend, and then prepared to listen with rapt attention. Juliet gazed surreptitiously at the lank, ungainly figure with its thin sallow face, its big hands and feet — poor Bobo! at this stage of his existence these were the most noticeable things about his person — yet once the music had begun that ugly face of his was pleasant to watch. How absorbed it was, how transfigured by the purest and most unselfish artistic delight! Now his black eyes would flash in their cavernous setting, his lip would quiver, his nostrils dilate. Once he murmured to himself with a sigh of rapture, "Que c'est beau, mon Dieu, que c'est beau!" When Christian had concluded, Bobo wrung him by the hand and then turning to Juliet remarked with a certain proud proprietary air:

"C'est qu'il est fort, ce garçon-là! il est fort, hein?"

"He plays very nicely indeed," said the Countess, obligingly. "Merci beaucoup, danke schön. But now we must hear you."

"I? Oh, after Christian I do not advise it, madame. No, really it would be a pity."

"Nonsense," said Christian, "you play very well. Do not make too much noise and it will go."

"What do you advise?" said Bobo, gazing at him darkly. "The Liszt?"

"The Liszt will do very well, but do not forget that the room is a small one."

Bobo stared at him for a moment unseeingly, pulling out his long fingers and kneading his broad palms; then with a sigh he sat down at the piano.

Nothing could be more unlike the graceful, self-possessed Christian than this odd-looking hobbledehoy, yet no sooner had he struck a few chords than Juliet was aware of certain points of resemblance between them. The same absorption, the same absolute self-surrender; here was the music taking possession of him just as a few moments before she had seen it taking possession of Christian.

Those chords made the piano stagger, and now a very torrent of sound filled the little room. Bobo's form swayed from side to side in a kind of ecstasy, his big red hands flew over the notes, his lank black locks fell over his face and were impetuously jerked back: it was an extraordinary performance.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the Countess when the crashing was at its height and the little window jingled in its ill-fitting socket, while the very floor shook under each vigorous

stamp of the pedal. "We shall be deaf if this goes on much longer!" And her fingers flew to her ears.

"Ah, please!" whispered Christian, pleadingly, "he will be so hurt if he turns round — poor Bobo!"

He stepped noiselessly to the window, which he very quietly opened so as to permit some of the volume of sound to escape. Bobo played on, unconscious of everything except the music, into which he threw himself with ever-increasing zest. In fact the most noticeable feature of his performance, besides undeniable power and brilliancy of execution, was a passionate fervour — a very frenzy of ardour and delight. Looking at him Juliet was insensibly reminded of a phrase she had once heard applied to Rubinstein: "Ce géant endiablé du piano."

"Play your little Bach, Bobo," cried Christian when he had finished; while the Countess sat mute and bewildered, and Juliet vainly cudgelled her brain for words in which to convey her impressions.

"Tu crois?" returned his friend, doubtfully. "Well, if you will."

He played his little Bach with, it must be owned, a certain amount of violence, and turned round at the end with a dissatisfied face.

"I have no scope in Bach," he complained.

"You did not make the most of the *Musette*," said Christian. "It is very delicate."

"Bah! I have no taste for musical-box effects. I am going to learn something new. I am getting up a Beethoven."

"No, Bobo, do not," cried Christian, earnestly. "Beethoven you cannot play; it is folly to attempt it. Liszt, yes; Brahms und Rubinstein, and any of the Russian school, and even Grieg — some of him — all that. But Beethoven? No, my dear Bobo, no."

The Countess and Juliet listened, much interested and amused. Both the young men seemed to have forgotten their presence and were gazing at each other, the one in real concern, the other alarmed and slightly resentful.

"It is too late," said Bobo, at last, somewhat sulkily. "I am to have my first lesson in the 'Moonlight' on Thursday week."

Thal cast up eyes and hands to heaven:

"The Master will grind you to powder," he said. "But never mind; we have all had our turn."

"Is Herr Adlersohn as hard on you as ever?" inquired Countess de Galphi. "I used to think him dreadfully severe and sarcastic."

"He grows worse as he grows older," re-

turned Christian, with a kind of gloomy pride. "Ah, the old eagle has kept his claws, I promise you. That poor fellow the other day — you remember, Bobo?"

"If I remember!" cried Bobo, "I wonder if he is still alive. I should not have survived such disgrace."

"The poor wretch," resumed Christian, turning to the Countess. "He was to play for the first time in the class, you understand; and the Master had a touch of the gout. Ah, he was brutal."

"But what happened?" cried the Countess and Juliet together.

"Ce pauvre diable," said Bobo. "He sat down, you see, with the Master at the other piano, watching him from under his great tufted brows. Well, he begins, le malheureux, plays a few bars, and breaks down. The Master turns a little more towards him, but says nothing. He makes a fresh start and breaks down again. The old man's eyes are like two little points of fire — hein, were they not, Christian?"

Christian corroborated this statement with a nod.

"Once more (for the third time, remark it well) he makes the same attempt with the same

result. There was a silence — was there not a silence, Christian? We were all afraid to breathe, and then the Master gets up very slowly, and the other gets up too, and backs away before him to the door. His face was as white as my shirt and his eyes starting from his head. Once arrived at the door the Master takes him by the shoulders and turns him round — 'Adieu!' says he. Ma parole d'honneur! You understand that after that it was finished!"

"How cruel!" said Juliet, indignantly. "I think I detest your Maestro."

"Oh, no, mademoiselle," cried both the youths together, "on the contrary, if you knew him you would love him!"

"He is adorable," added Bobo, rapturously, on his own account.

"There is no one like him," said Christian, more soberly. "You see it is good for one to be—how do you say?—kept up to the mark — "

"What does that mean — de mark?" put in Bobo, plaintively.

"It sharpens one up," pursued his friend, without noticing the interruption, "to know that *nothing* will be passed ever, that the smallest slip, the smallest oversight will bring

down the old man's thunderbolts. And then what he puts into one — what he makes one see — what he makes one feel. I tell you, mademoiselle, one feels one's brain expand, one's powers grow under the domination of his. He is a Genius."

"But the classes must be terrible," objected Juliet.

"Yes — perhaps, before one has reached a certain point. What we mind most is not so much him as each other. One minds being turned into ridicule before everyone else — "

"*Ah!*" groaned Bobo, with a shudder. "Figure to yourself thirty or forty of your comrades — all eyes and ears, clever, critical, censorious — each one for the moment not a comrade but a judge. And then when the Maestro puts you upon the rack and when they watch your contortions — ah, one is not inclined to laugh, I can tell you."

"Bah, each one has his turn," said Christian, lightly. "Do not look so horrified, ladies, it is not always like that. Sometimes he is pleased, and shows that he is pleased, also before everyone. Then — on est joliment heureux."

"Je crois bien!" cried the Countess, plunging into the conversation with terribly nasal emphasis. "These classes must be very amus-

ing. I should like to go one day. Should you like to see one of these classes, Juliet?"

"Immensely!" responded the girl, enthusiastically. "It must be so interesting — so exciting! But could we?" she added dubiously. "Would he — Professor Adlersohn — allow strangers to come?"

"Strangers!" repeated the Countess, indignantly. "I beg to state, my dear, that I know Herr Adlersohn quite well. I have been to a soirée at his house."

The two musicians, who had been looking at each other doubtfully, now cheered up.

"Ah, of course if madame *knows* the Maestro it should not be difficult. He sometimes does allow his friends to be present."

"Write, madame, write and ask his permission," cried Christian, eagerly. "It is an experience which will amuse and interest you both; of that I feel sure."

"You will hear me play my 'Moonlight,'" said Bobo, beginning once more to knead his hands together with an absent look. Christian turned on him sharply.

"How did you manage to persuade him to give you Beethoven?"

"Oh, I don't know; I implored; I believe I wept. He said I was right to have a culte

for Beethoven. If I approached him in the proper spirit as I would approach a sacred shrine; if I put off my shoes and uncovered my head; I might try."

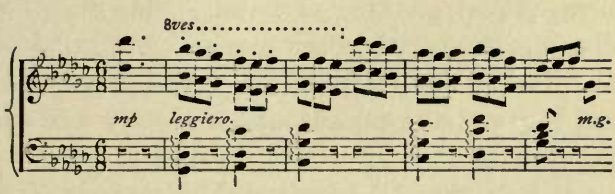
"My poor Bobo!" sighed the other, gazing at him dispassionately. "I fear me if you do put off your shoes you will still make — too much noise."

Bobo coloured, but smiled good-humouredly enough.

"You should certainly come to the class, mademoiselle," he said, turning to Juliet. "Ce gaillard-là — he shows you a little what to expect. But think, forty pupils, forty critical judges, forty Cæsars."

"What folly!" cried his friend. "There is only one Cæsar, mon cher."

CHAPTER III



AN urgent, oddly-worded characteristic note was presently despatched by Countess de Galphi to the great Professor Adlersohn, the light of the musical world, the maker of reputations, the cultivator of genius — critic, seer, and craftsman all in one. Him did she approach as no other woman in the world would have approached him — and with success.

A small unfastened envelope, bearing a five-heller stamp and containing a visiting-card, arrived on the morning after her appeal had gone forth. Underneath the Maestro's name was scrawled the single word: *Yes.*

Juliet laughed and clapped her hands.

"How delightful! I do love these people and their ways. They are all so queer — unlike everybody else!"

"You will be getting quite Bohemian yourself soon," said the Countess, smiling good-naturedly, however. "*Did* I hear you call that long black boy *Bobo*, yesterday?"

"He begged and implored me to do it," returned Juliet, growing very red. "He said they all call each other by their names. And they all do. Haven't you noticed it? And they—they said I was giving myself airs; and they *will* call me 'Juliet.'"

"Who's they?" inquired Madame de Galphi, with her head on one side.

"Oh, Bobo Michotte and Christian — Herr Thal, I mean; they all do it, and Rosie does it too. And I thought it seemed ridiculous for me to hold out — if it's the custom here. I wrote and told Daddy about it — do you think he'll mind?"

"I don't suppose he will," returned the old lady, who had herself a sublime disregard of all conventionality. "Boys and girls together — such a lot of you — you can't be stiff. It wouldn't do for you to be a prig, Juliet; and anyhow it doesn't matter one way or the other; you will probably never meet these young people again."

"Oh, I hope I shall meet Christian again!" cried Juliet, with sparkling eyes. "It will be

delightful when he is famous to think I have known him like this. Think, what an honour to be a *real* friend of a celebrity!"

"H'm, I like what's-his-name — Bobo — best though he does very nearly break the drums of one's ears when he plays. He is a nice simple creature. Now your Mr. Thal thinks too much of himself."

"No, no, he doesn't really; he can't help knowing what he is. But haven't you noticed that once his hands are on the piano he forgets all about himself?"

Juliet's cheeks were pink and her eyes were shining. The Countess looked at her sharply, opened her lips as though to speak, but, apparently changing her mind, smiled instead.

"He is extraordinarily handsome," she remarked after a pause, quite irrelevantly, "and poor Bobbles — Bobo I mean — is certainly not joli garçong."

"That has nothing whatever to say to it," returned Juliet, with dignity; and just then Bobo's sallow face, appearing at the door with an ingratiating smile, put an end to the conversation.

Juliet and her hostess had seen Mr. Bobo pretty frequently during the few days which had elapsed since they had first made his

acquaintance. Christian also, on one pretext or another, managed to bestow a good deal of society upon them. They had learned to lie in wait for the inevitable little ceremonial; a brisk step in the passage without, a momentary pause, a discreet tap, and then a head, followed by an insinuating person, coming diffidently round the door.

"It's the black one this time," said the Countess, half aloud as she took up her knitting, "but no doubt the blond one will soon follow; perhaps two blond heads. I think young Thal said something about Rosie coming —ou est Mademoiselle Rosie?" she inquired.

"Ah," said Bobo, dolorously, seating himself on the edge of a chair, "it is of her I came to speak. Ah, the little perfide—"

And he bent towards Juliet, continuing the conversation in an undertone.

"All right," muttered Madame de Galphi, "that'll keep 'em going for an hour or two; I think I'll go and look after my Count. The black boy is very safe; I'm not so sure about the other."

Bobo, indeed, found apparently much delectation in pouring forth his sentimental woes into Juliet's sympathetic ear. It had been conveyed to him gently but firmly by Christian that he

was on no account to transfer his affections to Miss Lennox, and, though his fidelity sometimes wavered, Bobo managed on the whole to adhere pretty well to the promise extracted from him on that occasion. Rosie, it seemed, was cruel, Rosie was coy, she was capricious: it gave Bobo great comfort to tell Juliet all these things, and though, as has been hinted, there were moments when the recipient of his confidences looked so pretty and animated that the narrator occasionally lost the thread of his story, and paused to roll admiring eyes on the consoler, Juliet found it easy, by a few calm and suggestive words, to bring him back to his original point. He would sometimes also tell her about the old father and mother in Paris, the little shop in the narrow back street, the pinching and scraping and self-denial, which had enabled the good folks at home to send their promising son all those leagues away so that his talent might be cultivated.

"That is another reason, you see, why I must succeed," he said, gazing at her dreamily. "Yes, I must grow rich and famous so that Rosie may not be ashamed of me; and then — les vieux! I must reward them."

There were tears in the black eyes; his features were twitching almost convulsively.

Poor Bobo! how different he was from Christian, and yet — was there not perhaps something more human about him?

At last the eventful Thursday came, and the Countess and Juliet set forth for the famous musical class.

Herr Adlersohn's house was not very far from the quarter in which the de Galphis lived. As they drew near, Juliet was struck by a certain remote resemblance to St. John's Wood. The houses stood back from the road, each the possessor of a garden, while a row of trees on either side of the street must have lent pleasant shade and coolness in summer. They arrived somewhat early, and Juliet was conscious of an unaccountable excitement as she mounted the steps. Her heart was beating so fast indeed that she herself might have been about to take a lesson from the redoubtable Maestro.

She and her companion were ushered into a large room forming one of a suite, after the manner prevalent in Austrian houses; a smaller apartment opening into it on the left, while another of larger size could be reached through double doors on the same side as the door of entrance. These were now closed, but Juliet noticed that the eyes of many of the people present — and the room was already half

full — were fixed on them inquiringly and expectantly.

Two grand pianos stood side by side in the centre of the room, and the rest of the available space was taken up with rows of chairs chiefly occupied by young girls. Lively conversation was being carried forward in a variety of tongues: French, German, English, Italian; one or two little groups even talking eagerly in languages quite unknown to Juliet. Here and there this mass of talented youth was leavened by an eager-faced elder or two, a *Vorbereiterin*, or preparatory teacher, or a particularly favoured parent. As a rule Herr Adlersohn discouraged the attendance of parents: they were nervous and fussy and for the most part uninteresting; but now and then he made an exception.

Groups of young men stood in the background and in the corners of the two rooms, some talking and laughing, some with pensive and preoccupied faces, keeping silently apart. Amongst these Juliet presently recognised Bobo Michotte, who saluted them with a low bow, and a ghastly smile, but made no attempt to enter into conversation.

By-and-bye Christian came in and looked eagerly round, his face brightening at sight of Countess de Galphi and her companion,

"Ah, you have come!" he cried. "That is well. But you have not got good places; you must sit a little more to the left so as to see the players' hands, and the Maestro's face. See, there are two chairs — secure them quick! or they will be taken."

"What is the matter with poor Rosie?" said Juliet, catching sight of a pale woe-begone face in one of the rows behind, as they moved. "She is crying — and how ill she looks!"

"That is only because she is going to play," returned Christian, quite unmoved. "It is nothing; they are nearly all like that. Some of the girls are actually sick — quite sick in the morning before the class. Bobo is nearly as bad; he has been sitting in my room ever since breakfast with his head in his hands, saying that never, never, never will he go through this anguish again. It is the last time he comes to the class, he says; he would rather go back to Paris and become *Chiffonier*."

"And you are quite calm, I suppose?" said the Countess, as he paused laughing.

"As you see, Madame la Comtesse, I am calm," he returned, looking at her without flinching; but Juliet noticed that he was breathing quickly, and that the hand which rested on the back of the chair trembled slightly.

"It will still be a few minutes before the Maestro comes," he continued presently. "Would you like to make the tour of the rooms, Juliet, while you are waiting? if Madame la Comtesse would be so good as to keep your chair." He smiled insinuatingly.

"Bien, bien," said Madame de Galphi. "I'll keep it. Trot away — I don't suppose there is very much to see."

But as it happened there were a good many things to see, things which interested Juliet enormously. Besides the intrinsic worth of the pictures and objets d'art which the apartment contained, many of them were priceless from their associations. The beautiful statuette of Beethoven in one corner was a gift from the pupils; the portrait of Grieg was presented by himself. Yonder were busts of Mendelssohn and Chopin — each with a story attached to it, and here was the Maestro himself.

"What a head, hein?" said Christian, falling back a little, the better to gaze at it.

The massive head with its great overhanging brow and rugged features was already familiar to Juliet; she had seen many presentments of it since her arrival in Stättingen. The townsfolk were proud of their great genius, and busts of all sizes, pictures, photographs, even post-

cards adorned with his portrait were plentiful in the place. But she looked at it now with fresh interest. What a strong face — but how harsh the lines!

"What a man, hein?" said Christian, admiringly. "More than a man — a colossus. And once he was like one of ourselves. We have time yet — let us slip away — in the little anteroom there is a picture of him in his youth."

He opened the door as he spoke and led the way quickly across the hall to a small room on the opposite side, the walls of which were crowded with prints and photographs.

"Surely that never can have been like him!" exclaimed the girl, as he silently pointed out a small picture.

The beardless face of a young man looked out at her from the canvas; a face with the powerful brow that she knew; the massive jaw was there also, but the eyes seemed less piercing than dreamy, and the whole countenance was remarkable rather for delicacy and sensitiveness than for the masterful energy which in later life appeared to be its prevailing characteristic.

"They say it was very like him once," returned her guide. "People whisper that he is at heart as sensitive as any of us; and it is

well known that he was always too nervous to play in public. That is why he is so merciless to our terrors: nervousness is the unforgivable sin. He never spares us — but all for our own good, you know. If we did not get over our nervousness now, we never should; and no concert audience could be more alarming than this little assembly. See," he added in an altered voice, as he rapidly pointed from one to the other of the portraits on the walls, "there is Rubinstein, here is Francis Planté, and here is Paderewski. If there was time it would interest you to read the inscriptions — tributes from great men to one as great. Upstairs in another room are all our photographs; not framed like these treasures, but stuck anyhow into a band along the wall; the favourites have a way of coming to the top, and when one is in disgrace one gets pushed out of sight altogether. Sometimes one disappears. But let us go back. He will be coming directly."

As they returned to the music room, which was now packed to the utmost, as well as the smaller salon at the further end, they found that silence had fallen on the assembly. The folding doors had been opened and the large chamber into which they gave access was also full.

Everyone was attentive — expectant. As Juliet regained her seat, the door of the further room opened and the Maestro came in. A shaggy, iron-grey man: power, force in every line of face and figure; eyes keen, almost fierce under the frowning brows, nervous vigour in the long-fingered, capable hands.

He advanced a few steps, bowed quickly and as it were impatiently, right and left, and swept a glance round the crowded rooms.

"Who plays?" he inquired abruptly.

A kind of petrifaction seemed suddenly to have taken the place of the agitated expectancy of a little while before. All the young faces were turned towards him, but no one spoke.

After a pause, during which one might have heard a pin drop, he repeated with gathering ire:

"Wer spielt? Um Gotteswillen wer spielt?"

Rosie, with the courage born of despair, got up, tumbled over two or three sets of feet, and made her way to the piano beside which Herr Adlersohn was standing, where she paused, murmuring something inaudible to all but him. He nodded, and his face relaxed for a moment: the little Scotch girl was a favourite of his.

"There goes Cæsar!" murmured some one

behind, as Christian, very white but with a nonchalant air, walked leisurely up to the great man.

No softening of the face for him: a lightning glance from beneath a thunderous brow, a brief sharp word, a name scrawled with an irritably nervous hand on the Professor's tablets, and Christian stepped back. Gathering courage now, the pupils approached their master in twos and threes until a sufficient number had signified their readiness to play, when the tablets were closed, a straggler or two dismissed with an imperative wave of the hand, and Herr Adlersohn seated himself at one piano, while Rosie with a gasp of anguish took possession of the other.

"Those little cushioned hands," of which Christian had once spoken, did indeed seem able to do anything. If Rosie lacked the magnetism of Thal himself, if the fine fury of Bobo was also missing, she possessed a finished charm peculiarly her own. The perfection of training was here evident, and also, it might be said, the perfection of response. An admirably quick, sympathetic and receptive nature, a most pliant instrument — these had been placed at the disposal of a master. What wonder that he had achieved marvels! The technique was fault-

less, the touch exquisite, every point was seized, every delicate nuance made the most of; the listeners felt that skill and polish could go no further, and amid their subdued murmurs of applause reminded each other in whispers that it was Dumpling's last course and that she was practically "ready."

The Maestro said nothing, but something in his expression when she rose, made Rosie's face flame with pleasure and she came back to her place as though walking upon air.

It was now Christian's turn, and he approached the piano with his head thrown back, his lips slightly compressed and his nostrils dilated.

Herr Adlersohn's face once more lost its transient placidity, and he made an impatient gesture as the young man deliberately seated himself and struck a few preliminary chords. Juliet watched anxiously and curiously while the performance proceeded. It seemed to her that a species of antagonism existed between master and pupil, not incompatible with appreciation and even admiration. On Christian's side, at least, these were evident and once or twice as he played she thought she detected in a momentary lifting of the Maestro's brows and softening of his face that he was as it were coerced into approval.

All at once, however, he leaned forward with a harsh guttural exclamation, and seized the player's wrist.

Christian started violently: he had as usual forgotten his surroundings and been wafted miles away. He had been playing one of Chopin's most exquisite nocturnes, and his whole soul was still flooded with melody. He looked at the Maestro with vague dreamy eyes, eyes which scarcely saw him, and a rapt smile.

"You drag that phrase abominably," said Herr Adlersohn in his most grating tones. "You play it like a sentimental school girl. Pray, who gave you leave to take liberties with Chopin? There is no *rallentando* in the text."

Christian came down to earth again, but his face still wore an inspired look as of one who had seen visions.

"I take no liberties," he said in a low voice. "I gave my reading — that is all. One must have scope for one's own individuality."

Professor Adlersohn rose and bowed low with his most sarcastic smile. A titter went round the room followed by a breathless pause.

"So-o-o?" he remarked, then with scathing incisiveness: "Has it ever occurred to you that the world which has received Chopin may

possibly dispense with the individuality of Christian Thal?"

Fresh titters and whispers applauded this speech. Christian stood up, and threw a defiant glance round the room; then he turned and faced the Professor.

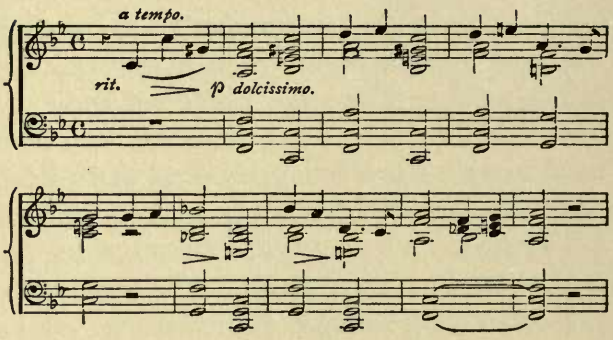
"I tell you, Master," he said, "the day will come when the world will own that Chopin has gained new beauties from Christian Thal."

With that he bowed, and walked away from the piano, pushing through the ranks of astonished students, until he reached a corner of the room where, with folded arms and eyes that proudly returned the curious glances of his companions, he took up his position.

For a moment or two an awful silence reigned as the Maestro followed his recalcitrant pupil with a searching glance. His face was red; his brows heavily drawn together, his mouth fiercely compressed. The little crowd waited, trembling, for him to open it and fulminate forth Christian's condemnation. Surely he would fall upon him and rend him. Probably he would avenge his senseless inconceivable defiance by a sentence of perpetual banishment; a sentence which to this devout band of worshippers meant death to a musical career. But Herr Adlersohn said nothing. After fix-

ing Christian with a gaze that had as much inquiry as wrath in it, he jerked out his tablets, glanced at them, and impatiently signed to the owner of the next name on his list to come forward.

CHAPTER IV



JULIET sat alone on the following morning, a book open on her lap, but her thoughts busy with the events of the previous day. She remembered a little anxiously the comments on Christian's rashness which had greeted her ears on all sides, as, at the conclusion of the *séance*, she and the Countess de Galphi made their way to the door of the class-room. Christian's temerity was evidently considered by everyone an unheard-of, inexplicable thing, and the Maestro's attitude toward him was deemed more extraordinary still. Many were of the opinion that it boded ill for the rebellious stu-

dent. Had he been openly denounced, had the chastisement for which all were prepared fallen upon him then and there, his chances of ultimate forgiveness would have been better. But that ominous silence, that deadly calm — oh, it was terrible! Especially as anyone could see how great was the Master's secret fury! He was biding his time and that stupid Cæsar would soon rue his folly!

And certainly, as Juliet now recalled with a sinking heart, Christian's delinquency had thrown the old man into a savage temper. The rest of the pupils had been made to suffer for it. How he had gibed at them, mocked them, rated them! Now he had been all ghastly politeness, now all fiery scorn. Bobo, as the time drew near for him to play, had been seized with abject terror, and holding his handkerchief to his face to check a simulated bleeding of the nose, had made a tremulous exit, his progress to the door being hastened by a glance of withering contempt flung at him by Herr Adlersohn, whom his mendacity had entirely failed to deceive.

Juliet smiled to herself even now as she called up the vision of Bobo's agonised expression and goggling, panic-stricken eyes! But then her mind flew back to another

image — Christian standing motionless in the corner, his set face, his fierce looks.

Someone in passing yesterday had whispered that he found himself in that room probably for the last time; even the Countess, pursuing her usual vein of cheerful pessimism, had repeatedly declared that he had done for himself. Oh, surely not! Surely the great career which he had marked out, the career which, as Juliet's father had foreseen, was to stamp its impress on the world, would not receive a check thus early.

Ah! someone was coming quickly down the passage; not Bobo — the step was at once lighter and more rapid; the subsequent tap on the door was more imperative than his. Yes, as she expected, it was the blond head which presently appeared in the aperture.

"Alone!" said Christian, and in a moment came round the door and closed it. He paused for a moment just within the room, looking towards Juliet from beneath knitted brows. His face was pale and moody, and there were dark circles round his eyes.

"What is the matter?" cried the girl, rising quickly, and coming towards him. "There is no bad news? Oh, I hope —"

"Why should there be bad news?" he inter-

rupted, and with a quick impatient backward jerk of the head.

"I only thought — I was afraid — oh, Christian, I cannot help being anxious ever since yesterday. I am afraid you were not wise in defying your Master! Everyone seemed to think it extraordinary. They were all saying that he would give you your congé!"

"He knows better than that," said Christian, with a short laugh. "He hates me — he is furious with me — but he is proud of me. He knew very well that I was speaking the truth yesterday — I saw it in his face; did not you? Besides," he went on, without pausing for a reply, "even if the old man were to cast me off, should I not still be what I am? Why are you silent? Do you doubt me?"

Juliet, confounded by his vehemence, did not answer immediately, and his face changed, the hands which had been passionately gesticulating suddenly dropped. He stood staring at her blankly, and then uttered a groan.

"You do not believe in me," he said tragically; "then perhaps after all I am deluded myself, perhaps I am only a miserable dreamer, perhaps my ambitions are worthless. Yes, I see it in your face — you think I can do nothing, you think I am a poor conceited fool!"

Juliet burst out laughing: "Oh, Christian, if you could see your face! And what nonsense you are talking! Now you know that I know —"

She stopped, still smiling though with a certain timidity.

"What do you know?" he cried eagerly.

He dropped down beside her on the sofa, first removing the book which she had laid down on his entrance.

"Give me my book, and I will show you. There, —" rapidly turning over the pages, — "you see this little Edelweiss which I have put here to press? Well, let that tell you all I expect you to do."

"That little woolly flower?" said Christian, with a laugh that had an odd tremor in it.

"Ah, but think of where it grows," cried she; "on the mountain-tops! Remember my father told you that you were to walk the heights."

"And do you tell me that, too?" he asked in a low voice, his eyes with their full lids were downcast, his lips serious. "If you tell me I will do it."

"Juliet!" cried the Countess, suddenly bursting through the door, and starting back as she saw the two young heads bent together over the book. "Good gracious! who's that? Oh, it's

you, Monsieur Thal. Well, aren't you ashamed of yourself? Juliet, your maid is going into fits because you have not gone to try on. She says that, do what she will, she can never get hold of you."

Christian rose to take his leave.

"I am not at all ashamed," he said softly. "No, not at all. Perhaps the Maestro is, but I not."

"You might be the better of it, my friend," returned the old lady, tartly. "What in the world were you talking about," she added abruptly, as the door closed behind him.

"Oh, lots of things," said Juliet, colouring.

"Humph," said the Countess, "was it necessary for him to sit so close to you on the sofa? In Austria and Deutschland young men never sit on sofas — only dowagers do. Now come along and try on. I'll come, too, to give my opinion."

They encountered Andrews in the passage.

"I was on the look-out for you, Miss Juliet; I thought as soon as the musical young gentleman was gone I'd maybe have a chance."

The girl went into her bedroom without replying, but her face and neck, even her little ears turned scarlet, and Andrews's next remark did not tend to restore her equanimity.

"I can't help thinkin'," said that worthy,

removing half-a-dozen or so of pins from her mouth, "how people does change as they grow up. Now, Miss Juliet, you was a terrible one when you was a child for disliking young gentlemen. Dear, I remember when those nice little Master Harrises from the Rectory used to come up to play with you now and again, how you used to hate it! 'Now they'll all come tramperin' in,' says you to me once, when we was expectin' them to tea in the nursery, and another time after they'd been, when I asked you had you enjoyed yourself, 'No, indeed,' says you, 'to tell you the truth I don't like boys — they're too runny and jumpy,' says you."

Countess de Galphi rolled her black eyes wickedly:

"Young people change very much as they grow up, as you say, Andrews. Miss Lennox seems to have conquered her aversion in a wonderful way."

"Oh, you know you can't compare Christian to an ordinary boy," cried Juliet, turning round with cheeks once more aflame. "Besides, it is not so much for what he is now that I like and — and admire him, as for what he is going to be."

"Humph!" said the old lady, with her head on one side. The incredulity plainly expressed

in her countenance caused Juliet a twinge of conscience. A vision suddenly floated before her mind's eye of Christian's handsome, winsome face and laughing eyes. Was it indeed only for his future greatness that she liked and admired him?

"Well, you must admit he is not an ordinary boy, anyhow," she resumed quickly. "The ordinary boy, all angles and elbows and great big feet — "

"Like Bobo," put in the Countess, slyly. "I am sorry to hear that you have so great a contempt for poor Bobo. He would be desperately wounded if he knew."

The gay vision conjured up by Juliet's fancy vanished at her words and was replaced by the image of honest, ugly Bobo; an image which called up sentiments humorous, affectionate, sympathetic — anything rather than contemptuous.

"Poor Bobo, too," she began, and then she burst out laughing; "I suppose I have changed," she owned.

"And a very good thing too," said her friend. "Your father has kept you till now in a bandbox, well wrapped up in cotton-wool. You'll get rid of some of that here, that's one comfort."

The sun was setting on that same afternoon

and the sharp tingling cold which portended coming frost had already begun to make itself felt when Annola Istó made her way homewards after a shopping expedition. Her face was nipped by the keen air, and her spare frame shivered; she carried no muff, and as she walked pulled the cuffs of her jacket over her shabbily gloved hands; a purely mechanical action, for she was so much preoccupied that she was scarcely conscious of the biting cold.

On reaching the house where she and Christian lodged she ran up the stairs, with a speed unusual to her, arriving quite breathless on the landing of the third story. As she paused a moment, panting, she listened eagerly for the sound of Christian's piano, and frowned at the all-pervading stillness.

"Out again, I suppose!" she muttered to herself; and then hastening along the passage unceremoniously burst open the door of his room.

The blast which rushed towards her as she threw open the door announced that the window was open; the little stove looked black and cheerless, and the temperature of the room was that of an ice-house.

But Christian was not out; on the contrary, he was kneeling by the window, his elbows rest-

ing on the narrow sill and his head supported by his hands, apparently quite unconscious of the temperature of the breeze which was lifting the loose hair from his brow.

Annola pushed the door to behind her and strode across the room, seizing him by the shoulder.

"Christian!" she cried, "Christian, what is it? Surely you are not weeping."

The evening sky without was all dappled with amber and rose, bright paths of light shone out across the roofs of the houses opposite, every gable was aflame; down in the street yonder the very pavements seemed to be of gold. The little room, too, was full of light, and Christian as he turned towards his friend showed a radiant face from out his nimbus of dishevelled locks.

"Weeping, Annola!" he cried with gay surprise. "In the name of Heaven, why should I weep?"

His tone, his laughing face, contrasting with the burning anxiety which had tortured her during the greater part of that day, aroused in Annola a sudden frenzy. She pushed him from her, and then falling back a little, gazed at him in wrathful silence, afraid for the moment to trust her own voice.

Christian closed the window, rose leisurely, treated himself to an almost imperceptible stretch, and walked toward the stove.

"Why, the fire is nearly out," he cried cheerfully, and, flinging open the little door devoted himself with much clattering and hammering to the task of mending it. Annola stood a moment or two longer by the window, with compressed lips and hands tightly squeezed together; then she came slowly towards him.

"Christian, what is the meaning of it? Put down that poker," with increasing irritation, as he continued to scrape and rattle. "Put down that poker and attend to me."

Christian asserted his independence by keeping hold of the poker, but he obediently straightened himself and looked her full in the face.

"What is the meaning of what?" he asked, smiling.

"Of your extraordinary behaviour — of the change which has come over you lately. You always seem to me absorbed, preoccupied — as if you did not realize what you were doing. You seem to me to live in a dream."

"Perhaps I do," said Christian, quietly. He turned toward the stove again, and inserted the narrow hooked poker between the bars.

With an inarticulate exclamation Annola sprang upon him, pinioning his arm and endeavouring to wrest the implement from him.

"I will have an answer," she cried, almost spitting out the words: "I will not be put off like this. You shall attend to me."

He relinquished the poker so suddenly that she staggered back a pace or two: it was a real boy's trick, and he laughed mischievously. Making a sharp effort to regain her self-control, Annola said sharply:

"What were you doing by the open window just now?"

Christian glanced at the window, and then back again at her.

"As you yourself suggested, I was probably dreaming, Annola."

"Dreaming!" she cried violently. "Yes, you can dream while I can hardly breathe for anguish. Christian!" she cried, almost with a shriek, "what are you thinking of! Do you realise that by your insane conduct yesterday you have jeopardised your whole career? On all sides I have heard of nothing else. Everyone is thunderstruck. What in Heaven's name induced you to be so rash — so mad?"

Christian stared at her for a moment blankly, then with dawning recollection:

"What? *that?* I had almost forgotten it."

She made a futile effort to drag him towards the now fast fading light.

"You are either a liar or a fool," she said from between her closed teeth. "You had almost forgotten it! And I — every ring of the bell, every step on the stairs makes my heart beat till I nearly suffocate! I keep expecting each moment that a messenger will come to announce that the Master has dismissed you. And *you* — you — you can forget it — you can dream." She threw out the last word with scornful emphasis. Christian remained silent, smiling a little, but not impertinently. Suddenly he threw his arm lightly round her shoulders.

"Did you never dream, Annola," he said softly, "when you were young? Were you ever young, Annola?"

"Dream? — no," she cried, ignoring the last question, shaking him off and turning upon him fiercely. "My life was too full. I planned — I desired — I resolved — I worked! But dream — no."

"Then you were never young," said Christian, nodding gently to himself. "I thought as much."

Her eyes suddenly blazed.

"There is something behind it all," she exclaimed, her voice wavering and almost failing her. "What is it — what *is* it, Christian? You live as you say in a dream. You neglect your work. You are constantly out. Christian, where do you go so often?"

Her hands were on his shoulders now, her eyes were looking at him piteously. He took hold of her wrists gently and drew down her hands.

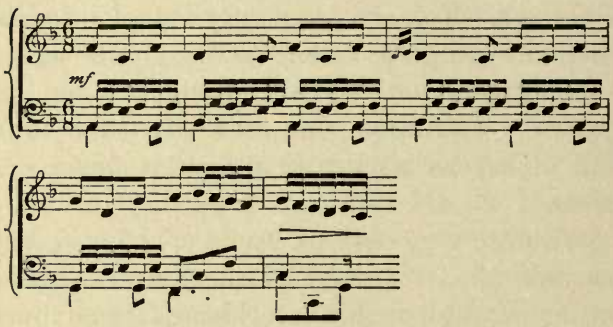
"You are very curious, Annola," he said, but not unkindly. "I don't know why you should put me through such a catechism. If you must know, I go to Bobo Michotte's house."

She stared at him incredulously.

"You go to see Bobo Michotte! But why this sudden friendship? There never was much sympathy between you."

"He is an excellent fellow," he returned carelessly; and then, loosing her hands, went over to the piano and began to play. Annola knew it was useless to endeavour to prolong the discussion. Christian did not intend that she should; he had been careful that no hint of Juliet's presence in the place should come to Annola's ears, and as he now buried himself in his technique he privately resolved to warn Bobo to be equally discreet.

CHAPTER V



THE days flew rapidly by, each, as it seemed to Juliet, more full of new and joyous experience than the last. She wrote to her father constantly, describing her doings with graphic humour. The Professor smiled to himself as he read her letters in the morning between his sips of coffee; and sent her brief notes in reply. He was very well; extraordinarily busy; the book was making strides. Horace Bulkeley was a most sympathetic and intelligent companion. He was delighted to hear that his baby was enjoying herself and that she was getting on with her German. He kissed her two dear pink cheeks and hoped they were very

plump and pink — and that was all! Sometimes instead of his last remark about Juliet's cheeks, he bestowed an imaginary kiss upon his favourite dimple. Not a word about Christian or Bobo; no hints of disapproval or the unconventionalities by which she was surrounded; no opinion as to the advisability or the reverse of allowing the promiscuous use of one's Christian name. Juliet sighed, pondered, decided that Daddy was too deep in his work to think of such trivial matters — and let herself go with the tide.

One evening she and the Countess were returning in high spirits from the opera-house, where Juliet had for the first time witnessed the performance of Carmen. Count de Galphi who was suffering from a cold, had prudently remained at home; and his wife, clutching Juliet's arm, had announced that they were quite capable of taking care of themselves. She was now entertaining her at the top of her voice and in a variety of languages, with certain reminiscences of an enlivening kind. Juliet, in spite of her amusement, was somewhat abashed at the frequency with which the passers-by turned to look at them; and in spite of a paroxysm of laughter was constrained to haul her companion on by main force when she paused to treat her

to an accurate representation of the goose-step as practised by certain German soldiers.

They had almost reached their own quarters when her own attention was attracted by the peculiar appearance and gait of a brace of figures at a short distance from them: two men or youths tightly linked together, making a slow and very devious progress in the same direction as that in which they were themselves proceeding.

"These seem to be very tipsy fellows," remarked Madame de Galphi, catching sight of them almost at the same moment. "They look as if they were quarrelling too. Let us go slowly and let them get on a little."

Juliet obeyed, nothing loth; and they loitered behind the pair who went serpentining on, pausing occasionally to struggle with each other, and then advancing again.

Their voices, eagerly and angrily disputing, came to Juliet's ears all at once, and she started.

"I do believe that's Bobo's voice," she cried; "and the other — yes, the other is Christian."

"Then I am sorry for it, my dear," returned the Countess, severely, "for they are both in a most improper state — no doubt about it!"

"No, no — look! I see what it is, Bobo is trying to get away from Christian all the time,

and Christian won't let him go. I don't believe either of them are tipsy," she added after a moment's eager scrutiny. "Christian seems to be trying to get Bobo home, and Bobo seems to want to go in another direction. Do you see, he won't turn down our street?"

The Countess, immediately fired with curiosity, quickened her pace, dragging Juliet along with her, and soon came up to the corner where the pair of disputants, still tightly linked together, were carrying on a fierce and heated argument.

"Vous tombez du ciel," exclaimed Christian under his breath as they came up with him. "Quick, quick, say you are going home to supper with him. He wants to drown himself — I have just dragged him back from the river. He must be kept at home at any price."

"Had he not better come to supper with us?" inquired Madame de Galphi, unconsciously adopting his low, hurried tone.

"No, no, that would not do. He might start up and run away at any moment. As your host he could not. Quick, say you are coming."

"But what is the matter?" gasped the poor lady.

"There is not time to tell you now. It was

at the class — the Professor — but no, I dare not. I have not left him for a moment ever since."

The unhappy Bobo had drawn back a little at sight of the ladies, his friend still clutching him by the arm, and, after a tragic gesture which had seemed to forbid them to accost him, had covered his face with one large hand. Christian now pulled him forward with a kind of spasmodic cheerfulness.

"These ladies are coming to supper with you to-night, Bobo," he cried. "Is it not so, madame?"

"Certainly," responded the Countess, vaguely hilarious, "to be sure! Juliet and I have been to the theatre, and we feel it would be dull to have supper by ourselves, besides we — we are en train, you see. We came out to enjoy ourselves and we haven't had enough yet."

"Ha!" said poor Bobo, rolling his eyes toward her. "You are too good, madame, you honour me too much. But I — alas! Christian, explain!"

Here he wrenched himself free and started off across the street at a kind of clumsy gallop. Christian followed him at a bound, caught him up, hooked on to him again, and silently dragged him back.

"He will be delighted, madame," he said emphatically. "He is, as he says, too much flattered. Don't be a fool, Bobo," he added, in a stage whisper. "How have you the effrontery to be uncivil to these ladies? Que diable! There would be plenty of time for you to drown yourself afterwards."

This argument seemed to have a certain weight with Bobo, who suffered himself to be propelled onwards for a few steps. Madame de Galphi catching at the suggestion, hastened to follow it up.

"Certainement," she cried, "chez nous en Angleterre quand un homme va être *pondu* on lui donne toujours un très bon déjeûner."

In spite of her accent the meaning of her consolatory words penetrated to the victim's inner consciousness, and he walked on with docility for the most part, though every now and then his anguish became too much for him, and he would make a spasmodic attempt to escape. Christian was invariably on the look-out, however, bringing him back after each digression with apparently undisturbed equanimity. By-and-bye, profiting by his friend's momentary abstraction, Christian turned towards Juliet and held up a paper bag.

"Our supper," he breathed in a scarcely au-

dible whisper. "You will have to bring something to eat too. There are only two sausages here, and I daren't let him go."

Juliet seized the first opportunity of imparting this piece of advice to the Countess, who was much excited, and secretly charmed with the whole enterprise.

"Of course, of course," she said. "I don't suppose the poor fellow could afford to give us anything to eat, to begin with. But what have we got, Juliet? Is there anything in the cupboard?"

"We can buy some brödchens at the corner of our street," cried Juliet. "And there is some foie gras at home, and biscuits — there are plenty of biscuits."

The whole party presently halted at the baker's shop, even Bobo so far relaxing as to become gloomily interested, and there the Countess purchased sundry appetising little rolls and cakes, after which they continued their progress.

"I'll go upstairs with them, my dear," she whispered eagerly as they entered the house; "I must stick to him, you see, or he might change his mind again. You go and forage. If the Count is there, tell him he had better go to bed."

Her eyes were shining with excitement, her cheeks flushed, her capuchon rakishly tilted to one side; she was enjoying herself enormously.

Juliet nodded and turned into the little dining room, leaving the other three to march solemnly up the stairs.

To her relief the Count was not in the adjoining room, having forestalled his wife's counsel and already betaken himself to his couch. She turned on the electric light and rummaged the cupboard; having already secured the biscuits and foie gras, when the sound of rapid steps behind her made her start, and turning round she saw Christian. He paused opposite to her looking somewhat sheepish.

"He — Bobo — has got no fire up there," he remarked diffidently. "Countess de Galphi said I was to bring up some fuel."

"There is the coal box," said Juliet. "Is it too heavy for you? And here is a newspaper to light the fire with. But we must have some wood. Joy, here is an old box in a corner of the cupboard. That will do splendidly, won't it?"

Christian nodded gaily. His diffidence was gone and his eyes were dancing.

"I left the Countess and Bobo preparing the table," he said. "She was hunting in his

wardrobe for a large white pocket handkerchief; but most of his are coloured and they have all got holes in them."

Juliet laughed, "Lena is in bed, I suppose, and will have locked up all our belongings too. But why does he want to drown himself?" she added, becoming serious all at once as, armed with provisions and fuel, they made their way to the door.

Christian's face changed and he set down his coal box.

"Ah, there was a terrible scene at the class to-day — le malheureux Bobo! I don't know what took him, but he imagined to himself to play his Beethoven. Judge a little — before he had even had a lesson in it. He has moments of inconceivable folly, that fellow. Well, Bobo and Beethoven, you can figure to yourself what an effect they made. The Maestro was quite quiet for a little. Then he jumped up and seized Bobo by the shoulders so as to turn him round; then rushed across the room and threw himself on his knees before Beethoven's statue in the corner. 'Forgive, Master,' he cried, turning up his face and raising his clasped hands, 'forgive, forgive.' You can imagine poor Bobo — why are you laughing?" he added reproachfully.

"I am not laughing," she retorted, "at least I don't mean to laugh — I don't want to laugh. You are laughing yourself," she concluded sharply.

"That's just it; no one can help it. And it was the same to-day — we all laughed. It was irresistible if you had seen the Maestro! But all the same it was horrible — cruel! Poor Bobo sat and gasped, and then got up and rushed out of the room. I went out after him and found him raving in the street and saying he would not survive. I have not left him for a second since. But it will not last — he will cheer up."

"And you — how did you get on to-day?" inquired Juliet, as he took up his burden.

"Oh, with me it went very well. I have had two lessons since, you know — since the last class I mean. The first day he scarcely spoke at all; the second time he nearly tore me to pieces, but I was very meek. It took some courage to propose to play to-day, but I did, and he was not in one of his worst humours. When I went to the piano he said, very sarcastically: 'Here comes the music-maker by excellence.' So I paused and bowed and said, 'And there sits the musician-maker by excellence.'"

"And was he pleased?" asked Juliet, eagerly, as she toiled up the stairs in his wake.

"He scowled and snarled, but I think he liked the *mot*. He let me play without interruption."

At this moment clattering steps were heard on the flight above them, and Bobo's head was thrust over the balusters.

"But make haste, Christian! What are you doing since an hour? The Countess is shivering."

"We come, we come!" cried Christian. "Have you found a tablecloth yet?"

"No — at least yes; I think I have an idea."

The dishevelled head disappeared and the clumsy boy's feet went hammering upstairs again: in spite of himself there were certain indications of unwilling exhilaration about poor Bobo which Christian was quick to notice. He turned a radiant face over his shoulder towards Juliet.

"Already it goes better!" he cried jubilantly.

Madame de Galphi's voice sounded through Michotte's open door as they arrived panting on the topmost landing.

"Cut it! Certainement pas! What are you thinking of? Look here, it is quite wide enough like this, and we can double the rest underneath."

"But unfortunately, madame, it will make a lump. Ah, I have an idea. This table has a drawer, do you see, madame? We will shut the neck and sleeves inside."

"Je vous fais mes compliments," said the Countess, laughing ecstatically. "Vous êtes très habile, Monsieur Bobo."

Bobo was modestly disclaiming as Juliet and Christian entered the room, but there was an air of unmistakable triumph on his face. He and the Countess were busily covering the table with a spotless white cloth. It was a somewhat peculiarly shaped cloth; double to begin with, of sloping form, and having two little gussets perceptible just where it dropped from the edge of the table on one side. As the newcomers approached, Madame de Galphi hastily enclosed what appeared to be a superabundance of material in the table drawer. Christian gave one glance at it and discreetly averted his eyes.

"The first thing to be done is to light a fire," he remarked cheerfully. "If you would superintend, Juliet, I think I could manage it."

As they bent over the stove together he whispered:

"The tablecloth! — have you observed the tablecloth? It is — it is" — almost choking

with suppressed laughter — "it is a night-shirt!"

"Now, Monsieur Bobo," called the Countess, imperiously, noting certain symptoms of relapse on his part, "come and help me; we haven't half finished. Where are your sausages? No, you can't leave them just in a paper bag — that would spoil the illusion. Haven't you got a plate? No? Oh, we must invent something. Excellong, mag-ni-fique idée. Now another. I said you were a garcong d'ésprit. . . . Now, Messieurs les convives, vous êtes servis."

The fire was crackling pleasantly by this time, and Juliet and Christian rising from their knees with alacrity approached the table. The Countess stood on one side with her capuchon slipping ever further and further away, and waving her hand with triumphant flourishes towards the repast; while Bobo, a little in the rear, was unable to resist an apologetic chuckle. In the centre of the improvised tablecloth was set forth the bottom of a soap-dish across which the two sausages were delicately balanced, and which was flanked on either side by the pot of foie gras and a symmetrical heap of brödchens. The biscuits were disposed in circles at either end of the table, and two paper-knives and

plates of folded writing-paper concluded preparations which were felt to be as elegant as they were original.

Juliet and Christian were loud in their praises of these ingenious contrivances; the Countess hastened to disclaim all credit in the matter, and Bobo was obviously conscious of a thrill of pride. Indeed, when the ladies had taken possession of the chairs and he, after attending to their wants, had seated himself beside Christian on the bed, he unwittingly began to swing his long legs with childish satisfaction.

What a ridiculous meal that was!

The sausages judiciously sliced with pocket-knives and served up on brödchens cut in half, the foie gras spread with paper-cutters, the biscuits respectfully handed on paper dishes and incontinently sliding off. The two boys perpetually hopped off and on the bed, rushing at the ladies between every mouthful with some fresh attention or suggestion, tumbling over each other in their eagerness, and varying the entertainment every now and then by mock quarrels, and abortive passes at each other with the paper-cutters. Bobo's eyes began to sparkle under their swollen lids; his voice became more and more animated, and he greeted Christian's sallies with enthusiastic laughter.

Once indeed the mirthful harmony seemed in danger of dissolution. The Countess, in describing the performance at which she and Juliet had that evening assisted, chanced to remark that her pleasure had very nearly been spoilt by an irritating neighbour, who had every now and then annoyed her by humming the finest airs under his breath.

"And what did you do, madame?" inquired Christian, frowning in sympathy.

"Oh, I just glared at him, and said very distinctly to Juliet how tiresome it was, and how I hoped he would stop."

"Ah, I have a better plan than that," returned he. "I generally turn to my irritating neighbour with a very amiable smile. 'Sir,' I say, 'you have a very pretty voice!' The poor wretch generally falls into the trap. 'But no, Monsieur; indeed I have no voice at all!'—'Then why do you sing?' I ask. Ah, you understand, he begins to look foolish and is glad enough to keep quiet."

It was at this juncture that Bobo uttered a hollow groan, and buried his face in the pillow.

"Holà! what is the matter?" cried his friend, tugging at his shoulders.

"Go away! you are a monster! you turn the dagger in the wound!"

And Bobo wallowed in the pillow, and groaned again. After a pause of dismay Christian again put his hand on the broad shoulder, eliciting fresh lamentations.

"You have no heart, va! How would you like to be made to look foolish? I can assure you it is not pleasant!"

Christian paused, looked blankly round as though seeking a means of escape, and suddenly cried out as if in consternation:

"These ladies have nothing to drink! Quick, Bobo, quick! Imagine something! Your honour as host is at stake."

Michotte sat up, thinking a moment and looking extremely rueful with his hair standing on end; then, jumping up, he ran to a shelf in one corner of the room, and produced a small tin of coffee and another of condensed milk; then from behind the stove he drew forth with a flourish an extremely black and much battered little saucepan.

What cooking ensued, how much discussion, how much excitement! And how extremely nasty was the compound that was finally poured into Bobo's solitary tumbler!

The Countess promptly and candidly delivered her opinion of this decoction, and immediately made over her share of it to Juliet;

the remainder being kept simmering on the top of the stove until the glass should be passed on to the young men.

"He has ideas!" remarked Christian, looking fondly and proudly at his friend. "He has ideas like nobody else. What do you think, madame, he imagined to himself the other day? We were walking together along the Graben. I had been talking as I often do"—with a droll, apologetic look—"about the mysterious attraction which the possessor of a great talent exercises over his fellow men, about the ease with which such a one can draw together crowds, when he suddenly said: 'I will undertake to collect a crowd without playing a note or saying a word or doing anything in the least wonderful.' He looks up and down the street with a very important air, draws a piece of string from his pocket, and gives me one end to hold. 'You stand there,' he says, 'and when I make a sign to you, put it down on the ground as if we were measuring it.' So off he goes, toujours d'un air très affairé, until he is about twenty paces away, which is the limit of his string, you understand—when he turns round and pops down his end of cord on the ground. I do the same. He looks along the string frowningly, nods, waves his hand to me,

and walks on again. I follow his example. At the end of another twenty paces he stops and recommences. The passers-by begin to look round, then to draw near, then to ask questions. He waves them aside imperiously, being too much occupied, you understand, to attend to them; then on he goes, followed by twenty or thirty people. At the end of another twenty paces même jeu — his face always solemn, preoccupied, rather anxious. I naturally follow suit. More and more people gather round us. 'Something has gone wrong with the electric light,' says one. 'No, it is the water-works,' cries another. 'I fancy it must be the telephone,' exclaims a third. Bobo appears not to hear any of them, continues to nod and frown to himself, makes cabalistic signs to me, to which I respond to the best of my ability, and finally jerks the string out of my hand, rolls it up, puts it in his pocket, and then just as the traffic is in danger of being seriously impeded, he remarks in a loud voice, 'Now it is finished,' takes my arm, and walks away."

By this time Bobo was so far recovered as to join in the laughter which greeted this anecdote, and to swing his legs once more with evident glee.

"Ah, c'est un farceur, allez!" went on Chris-

tian, stimulated to further effort. "Last week, again, in the picture gallery — you remember, Bobo?"

Bobo giggled appreciatively.

"He suddenly said to me," continued Christian, "'Now I am going to be an Englishman.' You know he cannot speak a word of English, but he clasped his hands behind his back, held himself very stiff and straight, and began to speak — in quite an English voice, I assure you — a most extraordinary jargon, with 'Oh, yes,' at intervals. I don't know how he managed it, but it really did sound like English. People began to follow us round, and to say, 'What can he be? He has a strange accent. He is certainly an Englishman, but it is impossible to understand a word he says.'"

Michotte sat with his eyes cast down, smiling to himself.

"Now I cannot believe that," said the Countess, laying down the paper-knife with which she had been spreading foie gras, and turning laughingly round.

"Bobo," cried Christian, imperiously, "this lady does not believe in you — you must give her a sample of your prowess."

"Oh, do, do!" cried Juliet, ecstatically.

Bobo got off the bed for probably the forti-

eth time that evening, clasped his hands behind him, and, with head thrown back and shoulders stiffly set, began to parade up and down the narrow space, holding forth the while in a gibberish which certainly did bear a curious resemblance to the English tongue. His intonation, at least, was perfect, and the impassive face and magisterial air — faithfully copied, no doubt, from some travelling British magnate — contrasting as it did with his own unmistakably Gallic personality, made a combination that was indescribably funny.

The Countess and Juliet laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks; Christian chuckled and rubbed his hands; only Bobo himself remained imperturbable, and with varying inflections in his strident voice continued his unintelligible harangue.

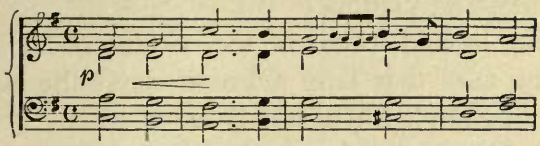
Christian was in the act of applauding him with loud claps, and the Countess, leaning back in her chair, was testifying to her approval by rapping the edge of the now empty soap-dish with her paper-knife, when the door was suddenly thrown open, and Annola Istó entered the room.

"Christian! are you here, Christian?" she cried as she advanced. "I happened to find myself in the neighbourhood and thought I

would run up here on the chance of finding you. You might walk home with me. It is late, and I do not like — "

The conclusion of the phrase was never spoken. She had been peering about her anxiously and nervously, and now stopped short, almost leaping back and throwing out her hands with an involuntary gesture of surprise and dismay, for at that moment Juliet rose from her seat.

CHAPTER VI



A DEAD pause ensued. Christian remained absolutely motionless; Bobo Michotte stood pulling his long fingers, and vainly endeavouring to hit upon a remark which should relieve the tension of the situation; and the Countess de Galphi stared with all her eyes at the strange gaunt woman whose unceremonious advent seemed to have cast a blight on the little assembly.

Juliet was the first to regain her self-possession. Pushing back her chair, she made her way to the spot where Annola stood, and held out her hand.

"How do you do, Fräulein Istó?" she said.

Annola mechanically touched her hand, and then let her own drop by her side.

"I did not know you were here," she muttered, the words hardly intelligible, so stiff and dry were her lips. "How long — how long have you been in this place?"

"Oh, we have been in Stättingen some time," returned Juliet, quietly, though her heart was beating fast. "I am staying in this house with Countess de Galphi."

She looked towards the Countess as she spoke, and that lady acknowledged the semi-introduction with a stately bow, which would have been more impressive if her head-gear, precariously poised as has been said, had not seized the opportunity to slip forward over one eye.

Annola's glance rested on her for a moment half contemptuously, and then swept round the room, taking in every detail of the curious feast, the general disorder of the poor little place, the dishevelled appearance of the guests; noticing even that Juliet's pretty hands were blackened by her labours in fire-lighting and cooking.

"I did not know you were here," said Annola again, her gaze reverting to the girl. "Christian did not tell me. And you, Prospèr Michotte," she added in French, turning to him, with sudden anger, "you did not tell me that Miss Lennox lodged here."

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed Bobo, with a shrug, and a mendacious assumption of carelessness, "I have such a head, do you see, mademoiselle.

No, it is impossible to imagine such a head! I never remember to tell anyone anything."

"Well — it does not matter," she returned, drawing in her breath sharply. "Are you ready, Christian?"

"Ready — for what?"

He had retained his impassive attitude and spoke frigidly, but his eyes glared at her.

"I wish you to come home with me," she said, with forced calmness.

"I have not yet finished my supper," he responded defiantly.

"Then I will wait," said Annola.

"Will you not at least sit down?" exclaimed Bobo, mindful of the duties of hospitality but making the proposal in a somewhat lukewarm tone.

She looked round mechanically, and Juliet hastily put forward her chair.

"Pray, take this seat — I do not want it, I assure you. I think we are going immediately."

She looked pleadingly at the Countess, but though the old lady was in the act of winding up her repast she was not disposed to be hurried; in fact her resentment towards Annola was only equalled by her burning curiosity.

"Who is she?" she inquired, in a stage whisper, as Juliet took up a position behind

her chair. "How did you come to know her? Why does she take possession of young Thal? *Eh?* I can't hear you, child. Never mind, I'll find you for myself — Je demande à cette jeune dame" — Madame de Galphi could never be made to relinquish the practice of conferring brevet-rank on her young friend — "je demande à cette jeune dame quelles relations vous êtes — vous, et Monsieur Thal."

"Madame!" ejaculated Annola, in wrathful astonishment.

"Dear Countess," murmured Juliet, fiery red with embarrassment, "Fräulein Istó speaks English quite well. But don't you really think, if you have finished supper, we might go?"

"Très-bien, ma chère enfant, nous irons dans un moment," returned the old lady, loftily ignoring the first hint. "Est-ce-que c'est votre tante?" she inquired, abruptly turning to Christian, and designating Annola by a wave of the hand.

"Non," replied he, shooting out the word viciously.

"Cousine?"

"No," he returned this time in English, "no relation at all. She brought me up."

"*Ah!*" said the Countess, in a satisfied tone. "Je comprend! Une vieille gouvernante."

"Christian, will you not satisfy this lady's curiosity?" cried Annola, turning to him suddenly and speaking in her fluent, emphatic, rather deliberate Hungarian French. "Explain to her the nature of my claim upon you."

He hesitated for a moment, and then turned to Madame de Galphi.

"I owe my artistic training entirely to Fräulein Istó. When I was quite a little boy she discovered me, took me to live with her, educated and provided for me. As far as my musical career is concerned I may say in a word that she has made me."

He spoke with studied calm, being evidently careful to avoid any ironical emphasis on the words, which in themselves were all that Annola in her most exacting mood could have desired; but it would be impossible to describe the iciness of his tone: it made of the enforced tribute an almost cruel act of insolence.

Tears started to Annola's eyes, but she turned her head quickly so that he should not see them.

Bobo, however, took note of her emotion and hastened to throw himself into the breach.

"Christian, another slice of sausage. Madame la Comtesse, may I not offer you this remaining cake? Mademoiselle" — turning to Annola, who had now recovered herself — "will you not

be persuaded to join our little feast? There are still — let me see — three biscuits, a bit of sausage, half a roll, and — no, there is no more foie gras. But the biscuits and the sausage are, I assure you, delicatessen of the highest order. What, nothing! — not even the roll?" — as she disdainfully shook her head — "you despise our simple repast!"

"It must indeed have been simple," returned Annola, speaking hurriedly, and scarcely taking the trouble to think of what she said, being in fact still smarting with her own pain, — "un festin d'anchorite."

"You may say so," cried Christian, his pent-up irritation bubbling over at last. "Il ne nous manque plus même la Tête — de Mort!"

The allusion was too marked to be lost on any of the little company; even Countess de Galphi felt that it was time to make a move; the atmosphere was too much charged with electricity to be pleasant.

Juliet gladly followed her out of the room, and Bobo tremulously assisted Fräulein Istó to pull up the wrap which she had loosened. Her lips were quivering, but she glared angrily at his compassionate face through the tears which she would not suffer to fall.

"Say then, Christian," he remarked after she

had gone downstairs, to his friend who lingered to light with defiant deliberation a cigarette at the little lamp. "It was a little strong what you said there."

"She irritates me too much," retorted he.

"What an unfortunate accident, hein? Her chancing to look for you to-night?"

"Accident!" repeated Christian. "She dogs my steps, she watches my face, she spies out every change of mood. Je suis à bout!"

He stood still for a moment, his hands in his pockets, his frowning gaze looking towards the door; then —

"I will have an end of it!" he cried and stalked out of the room, banging the door behind him.

"Ce pauvre Christian!" ejaculated Bobo, looking anxiously after him. "Ce pauvre diable! So long as he does nothing imprudent; but he is so impetuous, so self-willed!"

He shook his head sagely, and groaned over his friend's follies, having quite forgotten his own suicidal intention a little while before.

Christian found Annola waiting for him at the foot of the stairs, and the two set forth together in absolute silence.

She did not attempt to take his arm, nor to say a single word as they walked along, but

now and then when the light from a street lamp fell across his face she stole a surreptitious glance at it. It was more statuesque than ever in its stern fixity and pallor. When they reached their lodgings she was conscious of a strong feeling of relief, which was, however, short lived, for instead of going straight to his own room, Christian opened the door of the meagre little sitting room where Annola received her pupils, turned up the light, and with formal politeness requested her to come in.

"I have a word or two to say to you," he added.

"Must it be to-night?" she asked, looking round at the fireless room, and shivering, partly with cold, partly with excitement, partly with a curious kind of fear. She was afraid of herself sometimes — of her passionate undisciplined nature, and the lengths to which it led her; to-night, too, for the first time in her life Christian intimidated her. What might not this interview bring forth? What unforgivable words might be said; what impassable barriers might be erected!

"Yes; to-night. We must have an explanation, Annola."

"With all my heart," cried she. "I, too, have something to say to you!"

"As you can have nothing to tell me which

you have not already told me more than a hundred times, suppose I save you the trouble?" he said, in this new tone of frigid insolence which she found so hard to bear. "But I think to-night I have already repeated my lesson without fault. You found me, you made me; do not think that I am likely to forget it. I owe you much, but some day you shall be paid in full — to the last farthing. You should be satisfied with this."

She stood leaning with both hands on the back of a chair, her eyes fixed on him with a strained look, her lips unconsciously forming the words that he said.

"You understand — I am fully conscious of your claim. Is not that enough?"

"It is not enough," she returned in a low voice. "I have a right to your confidence; you have deceived me."

"Now listen, Annola," he said authoritatively. "It is as well this point should be made clear between us. I am an artist, yes — I owe the fact of being an artist possibly altogether to you; but I am also a man, and with the making of me as a man you had nothing whatever to do. My life, as distinct from my artistic career, is my own; my youth is my own; my personal liberty must not be tampered with.

My thoughts and hopes are free. The time has come to say these things. I will not be spied upon and interfered with and dictated to. Understand that once for all, Annola. One has but one youth, parbleu! — one life. I will do what I like with mine."

She made no answer, but he saw her hands tighten round the chair until the finger-tips showed white beneath the nails. His heart smote him for a moment, but he steeled it against her.

"That is all I have to say," he remarked in an altered tone.

"It is well," she said. "I too have learnt my lesson — but it is very hard. It will be very difficult to remember. After all these years, Christian — "

Her voice failed her and she broke off, putting her hand quickly to her lip to still its trembling. Christian immediately softened, though the first outcome of his emotion was a petulant reproach.

"Then why do you irritate me?" he cried, springing to her side. "Annola, you know — it was too much. You — you pushed me to it. You make me out of myself. Naughty Annola, what a face you made us to-night, hein? What a face! Are you not ashamed of it?"

"Ah, yes! The Death's Head!" said Annola with a smile that was half sad and half bitter.

"Ah, yes; I said that," owned Christian penitently, "but if you could have seen your face, Annola! And we had all been so gay — so happy! Why could you not let us be happy?"

His tone was tender now and his arm had crept round her.

She yielded a little to his caress, glad to regain his allegiance at any price; but she did not speak.

"You know," he said in her ear, "I must be happy. You must let me, you must."

Her eyes had drooped beneath their heavy lids; her long lashes almost sweeping her cheeks. Suddenly she looked up with a smile:

"All this because I broke in upon your little réunion?" she cried playfully.

"Annola," he said seriously, "do not pretend to be ignorant. *You know.* Oh," he went on eagerly, "why are you so hard to me? Why should you oppose me in this — you have been so good to me in far less important things. Let me be happy, Annola. I must live — I must love."

There was a long pause; she drew away her hand.

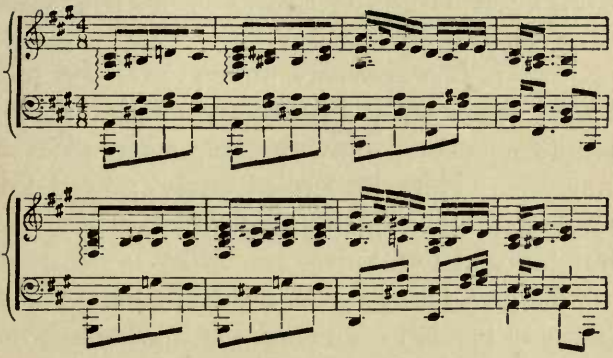
"What do you want me to do?" she asked coldly.

"Oh, nothing," he returned rather irritably. "Only to leave me alone."

"Well, I will promise that," she said.

Again his mood changed and he seized her hand once more. "You are an angel!" he cried enthusiastically.

CHAPTER VII



ONE afternoon in the following week, the Countess de Galphi and her young friend happened to be walking in one of the parks, not far from Herr Adlersohn's house.

It was a fine day, cold and sunny, one of those days which insensibly exhilarate, and Juliet almost danced along the glittering frost-bound path between the diamond-spangled clumps of evergreens. She was tripping on in advance of her companion when suddenly, at an abrupt turn in the path, she almost ran into the great Maestro himself. She had stammered half way through her apology before she identi-

fied him; upon which she became immediately overcome with blushes and confusion.

The old man, however, was not in one of his alarming moods: he nodded and smiled, looked benignly at her pretty rosy face, and helped her out with her explanation:

Gewiss: it was easily understood; the path turned so sharply just there — and she was doubtless occupied with her own pleasant thoughts. Here he smiled again, peered into her face, and suddenly exclaimed in an even more cordial tone:

"Ah, but I know you, my Fräulein. I have seen you before! You were at my house some weeks ago, nicht? I know it!" he added triumphantly, "I never forget a face!"

Juliet in the midst of her tremors remembered how Christian had once said the same thing, and wondered if this kind of memory were peculiar to musicians.

The Countess now came up, and at once plunged into the conversation after her own polyglot fashion, to the intense amusement of the great man, who took a malicious pleasure in making her repeat some of her most preposterous phrases; and by artful interpolations induced her to veer about from one tongue to another with even greater frequency than usual.

As he stood there with his hat pushed to the back of his head, and his face puckered into a thousand humorous wrinkles, he looked so good-natured, not to say benign, that Juliet found it hard to reconcile this actual presentment of him with her previously conceived idea.

Turning to her suddenly, he read her thoughts.

"The old eagle is not always savage," he said, looking at her with twinkling eyes.

There was a certain unconscious roguishness in Juliet's smile, confused though she was, which seemed to please Herr Adlersohn.

"The old eagle is not always savage," he repeated, surveying her with great favour. "Sometimes it is even possible to approach his eyrie unharmed. Now if you were to come to the eyrie to-morrow, you would find the old bird cooing like a turtle-dove, and all the eaglets at play."

Turning to Madame de Galphi, he explained that one of his little parties would take place on the morrow. Some of his pupils — only the good ones! — throwing out his finger with a portentous frown at Juliet — would be there in the evening, and would dance, he believed, and play about, and make a great noise.

"Will you come, both of you?" he asked.

"Wollen wir kommen?" cried the old lady. "Est-ce-qu'un canard veut nager?"

He stared at her for a minute:

"Is it a riddle?" he asked. "I give it up. I never can guess riddles, and I am personally unacquainted with the habits of ducks. Now if you had asked me a question about geese, I might have been able to answer — I have a good deal to do with young geese."

"Ah, m*échang*, m*échang!*" cried the Countess, and she actually had the hardihood to tap his arm playfully with her umbrella.

He only chuckled and walked on, turning after a few paces to shout out:

"Eight o'clock!"

Juliet was delighted at the prospect of being present at one of the famous entertainments of which she had so often heard, and which were the cause of so much heart-burning and vexation of spirit among Herr Adlersohn's disciples. Not all even among the favoured ones were privileged to be present: in fact, the arbitrariness of his selection was universally recognised. At the forthcoming festivity both Christian Thal and Bobo Michotte were to be present by invitation, though it was well known that recently both had in their several ways seriously offended the Maestro; while Rosie Gor-

don, who was as good as gold and acknowledged by Master and pupils alike to be a credit to the school, was, for no reason at all, left out.

Countess de Galphi was highly elated and took entire credit to herself for having conducted affairs to this prosperous issue.

"It never does to make a bugbear of a man," she cried. "You saw how pleased he was when I chaffed him. My dear, men don't *like* to be taken too seriously. I believe if all those students didn't look on him as a bogey, they would get on much better."

All the next day both the old lady and the young one were equally excited; and at eight o'clock punctually they mounted the Master's steps.

A babel of voices greeted their ears on the opening of the door, a surging mass of young folks blocked the hall; everyone was determined to be punctual, but no one had dared to arrive too soon.

Presently they seemed to melt away to some extent, and the hubbub diffused itself over the house; the notes of a piano were heard from an upper storey, jarring with a vigorous waltz-measure which had just been struck up in the class-room below; already some twelve or fifteen couples were revolving in the cleared space,

Looking round for the Maestro, the Countess and Juliet discovered, to their astonishment, that his were the fingers which supplied the necessary accompaniment to the dance. He nodded good-naturedly as he caught the girl's eye, smiled humorously at the Countess, and continued to hammer out his waltz without a moment's relaxation, occasionally emphasising the strain by a simulated obligato in a somewhat cracked voice.

Christian and Bobo made simultaneous rushes at Juliet from different corners of the room, Christian with his usual good-luck being the first to arrive and immediately securing her for his partner. Bobo, looking somewhat crestfallen, halted, shrugged his shoulders, and turned to the Countess with a pleasant smile:

"And you, madame?" he inquired, "will you not honour me by taking a little turn?"

"Je ne suis pas une si grande sotte que j'ai l'air," responded the old lady, promptly.

The Professor cackled from his music-stool:

"Allez toujours, madame. We are all fools together to-night. My wife is over there, capering with the rest of them."

"Not a waltz then," said she, with a jolly laugh, "I cannot dance anything more rapid than a mazurka."

"It shall be a mazurka," said Professor Adlersohn, instantaneously passing into the required measure to the surprise and momentary confusion of the young dancers.

The Countess figured away with great zest and activity, and Bobo too, in spite of an apparent superabundance of arms and legs, acquitted himself most creditably. Christian and Juliet for their part floated round as it seemed on air; the young man throwing into his performance the poetry and passion peculiar to his race. Juliet, ever quick to apprehend and assimilate, adapted herself with her customary grace to her part in the complicated evolutions which go to make up the real Slav mazurka.

"It seems more like acting than dancing," she said, laughing, as with a dramatic flourish the music came to an end.

"You should see our Hungarian czardás," cried Christian. "See, the Maestro is getting up — he is exhausted, the brave old fellow! Come, we'll get Károly to play us a czardás — there is a good sprinkling of Hungarians in the room. You must be my partner, of course; you will learn it directly."

Károly, a black-haired Jewish-looking boy with a magnificent brow, was forced to sit down at the piano, and looked laughingly round.

In another moment the slow wailing notes of the *Lassú* were floating from the keys, and a ring was forming round half-a-dozen pairs of Magyar lads and lasses.

"We must put our hands on each other's shoulders," said Christian, in a dreamy tone, "we must look in each other's eyes — oh! but you must look at me," as her glance fell before his — "we must think — of all kinds of pleasant things, and so, we sway lightly, until the music quickens."

Her clear eyes gazed as if fascinated into his. What was it she read there? She began to breathe quickly, to feel frightened. She was about to obey an unaccountable impulse to dart away, when the measure altered, became rapid, passionate, furious. She found herself doing all manner of strange things in obedience to Christian's whispered commands, now they were flying round together, now she was whirling apart from him; their hands touched, dropped asunder, joined again; then the music once more slackened, passed into a pathetic minor, and again they were swaying opposite each other and Christian's eyes were looking into hers.

"I think I will go back to the Countess," said Juliet, as Károly was pushed off the music-stool

by Bobo, who began to hammer out a polka. "It is too hot to dance any more."

"Come into the garden," said he; "it is cool enough there; I will get you a cloak. There is moonlight, see — it will be delightful."

He cloaked her with great care in a fur mantle belonging to somebody else, and they passed through the open window down the stone-steps which led to the garden. Here the grass was white with frost, the evergreens a-glitter, the very gravel sparkling in the light of a great majestic moon. Peals of laughter came from the further corner where a pretty girl was conducting a dancing lesson, her partner being a somewhat lanky English youth; one or two other couples were pacing sedately along the paths, but the arbour was empty. They entered it and sat down in silence. Even in the dusk Juliet felt Christian's eyes upon her, and the consciousness filled her with a sense of constraint mingled with an odd kind of expectation. The dancing lesson was continued amid little screams of laughter; across the brilliantly-lighted windows of the saloon, a stream of revolving figures passed and repassed. All at once Bobo's polka came to an end, and in the interlude a medley of voices and laughter rang out; then the piano was heard again

— no dance-music this time; somebody was playing Chopin's "Storm Study."

Juliet uttered an involuntary exclamation as she identified it.

"Do you not like it?" inquired Christian. "It is Károly again; he plays it well."

"Yes — I don't think I mind hearing him play it."

His quick ear detected the scarcely perceptible emphasis on the pronoun.

"Does that mean you do not like to hear me?"

"The last time I heard you I did not like it."

"I played it so badly?" queried he, naïvely astonished.

"No, so well — but so wickedly. You made the music wicked."

"But that was right, surely?" he cried. "I was feeling wicked myself that day, and I always put everything that I feel into the music, the bad as well as the good."

"Ah!" said she, bending forward earnestly, "I should like it to be only good. You know you are to preach to the world, is not that what Daddy said? 'You should use your great power to uplift and purify the world.'"

"If I ever preach," said Christian, very softly, "it shall be your gospel."

He was silent for a moment and then continued hesitatingly:

"Lately my music has pleased you, has it not? — it was all good. Have you not noticed something new in it? New — and yet as old as the world. Can you not guess?" he added, leaning forward suddenly. "Oh, Juliet, it is love!"

She threw out her little hands with an almost childish gesture of alarm.

"But, Christian, I — I know nothing about love!"

"You know nothing about love. But I will teach you. My little white bird, you shall learn my song. Oh!" he cried ecstatically, "to think that I should be the first — the very first. Juliet, you will learn from me, will you not? — you will let me tell you all about it? You will not find the lesson very hard."

"But, Christian, we are too young," she faltered, her hands fluttering in his, her dilated eyes shining in the dusk.

"Too young to marry perhaps," said he, "but not too young to love. We shall live for one another henceforth, you and I. You will inspire me, you will uplift me, and so, do you see, I will carry out your father's wish, and uplift the world. And some day, some day, when I

have conquered the world, I will come and give you again the honours which will have been already yours, for you will have won them all — and you shall give me — yourself. Oh, Juliet! promise me."

Before she could answer, and, indeed, words were not readily forthcoming, a rush of feet on the crisp gravel announced that their retreat was about to be invaded, and in another moment Bobo came charging in.

"Is it here I find you, Christian? I have been looking for you everywhere. We are going to have supper. Juliet, it is you? Madame de Galphi is looking for you. Come along; I have a wolf's hunger, moi! Come along, Christian."

Christian gripped his arm savagely as Juliet flitted out.

"To the devil with thee and thy accursed supper!" he whispered fiercely. "Why art thou for ever thrusting thy detestable long nose where it is not wanted?"

"A thousand pardons, mon cher," gasped Bobo, writhing in his clutch. "I did not mean to come at the wrong moment."

"The wrong moment, idiot! It was the supreme moment, the moment of moments, and now you have spoilt it!"

Juliet had fluttered away as if she had been indeed the little white bird to which he had likened her, nor was there again an opportunity for private conversation. Once when he besought her to dance with him, she answered him almost imploringly: "Not now; do not talk to me any more to-night. I must think."

But she could not think consecutively; she felt like one in a dream. Throughout the remainder of the evening, indeed, she was conscious of a curious, all-pervading sense of unreality. She ate and drank mechanically, danced with the conscience-stricken Bobo and one or two others, laughed at the ridiculous antics of some of the young folks, and responded gaily to the sallies of Professor Adlersohn, who had evidently taken her into favour; but all the time she had an odd feeling of being somebody else.

At midnight, the Frau Professorin locked the piano, and good-humouredly announced that she was going to bed.

"That is what may be called a gentle hint," said Countess de Galphi. "Come, Juliet, it is time for us to trot."

"But the evening is not half over," cried Károly, "the Master is in such a good temper to-night — he doesn't want us to go yet. Bobo

and I are going to sing a waltz, and Cæsar shall beat time. Quick, Bobo, quick, or these ladies will be going. Tra-la-la-la-la-la."

"Pom-pom-pom, pom-pom-pom," obediently chimed in Bobo, the deep bass of whose accompaniment almost overpowered Károly's labouring tenor.

"You go too quick," cried the latter, breaking off. "Cæsar, where is Cæsar? Cæsar, you are wanted to restrain this enthusiast. Here is your bâton," cramming a Naples biscuit into his unwilling hand. "Mount quickly on this chair. Now, Bobo, keep your eye on the conductor. Now!"

They were off again; Christian, after a whimsical deprecating glance at Juliet, marking the metre conscientiously with his biscuit. The dancers gyrated with renewed vigour, taking up the strain when Károly grew breathless, and interrupting themselves with bursts of laughter; Bobo's unwearying bass dominated all other sounds.

"Pfui, what a din!" cried the Maestro, raising his fingers to his ears. "My children, there must be an end of this — the neighbours will be saying that Professor Adlersohn is celebrating his third wedding. Come down, Jungling," he added, laying hold of the Conductor's vigor-

ous arm. "You had better eat that biscuit, you are the greatest baby of them all."

Christian dropped his biscuit and jumped down with a somewhat offended air. He was still at the age when it is nothing less than insulting to be taxed with youthfulness. He made his way to Juliet, who had just made her final farewells, and whispered gravely in her ear:

"I am glad this childishness is over. As you may imagine my thoughts to-night are full of more serious things."

But Juliet's little tremulous smile had a spice of malice in it, for she had not failed to notice the zest with which the Conductor had thrown himself into his part.

Someone coming up at this juncture, seized him by the arm:

"You have played us nothing to-night, Cæsar! Come to the piano."

"I will not play dance music," protested he. "Not now; not to-night."

"The Maestro was not too proud; but play what you like."

As Christian passed Juliet, he bent down to murmur in her ear:

"I shall be playing for you — it shall be my heart speaking to yours."

Yet after he had sat down at the instrument

and struck a chord or two, his hands dropped from the keys.

"To-night," he said with a deep sigh, "to-night I cannot." Then as they pressed him: "Look at my hands."

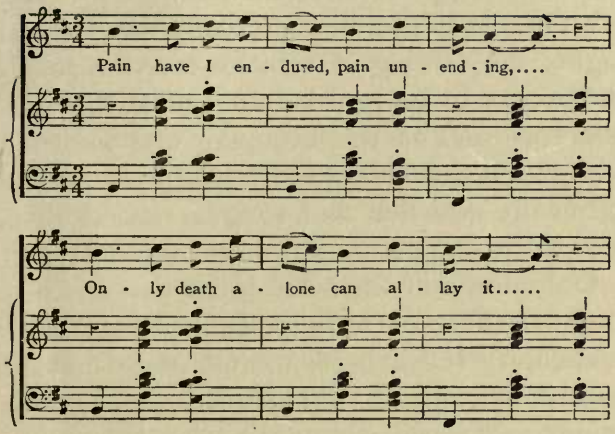
Indeed, they were shaking oddly.

"Thou hast danced too much, my friend," cried Károly.

"Or drunk too much of the Maestro's moselle," suggested another.

Bobo cast a searching glance at his friend, blushed violently on meeting his eye, and fell to cracking his fingers in an abstracted fashion.

CHAPTER VIII



JULIET lay long awake that night, her heart a prey to a tumult of emotions. Astonishment, wonder, a little fear, struggled with an ever-growing sense of happiness. How marvellous to be loved by Christian, to help him with his great work! Oh, she was not good enough, but then he thought so. Dear Christian, how could she ever prove her gratitude to him? Surely Daddy would not be angry if he knew — surely he would even be glad to think that she was associated with such a high vocation.

The hours wore on, golden, for all their darkness to the outer world, and Juliet's heart sang a happy song which drowned the clatter of the busy street beneath her window. The town of Stättingen was unusually wakeful that night; the rattling of vehicles over the cobblestones was to be heard even during the small hours as well as the tramping of pedestrians who laughed and chatted as they walked and frequently whistled and sang as cheerfully as though treading a country lane in mid-day.

Only now and then did Juliet pay any heed to the medley of sounds: once when after a momentary lull a brisk footfall rang upwards from the pavement. That tread seemed to be young and elastic; it might have been Christian's; again some passer-by whistled a fragment of a waltz tune, and she laughed to herself in the darkness as she recalled the boyish figure on the conductor's perch, his laughing face, his ridiculous imitation of the mannerisms of the well-known artist who led the orchestra at the opera-house. Every now and then when he had caught her eye he had sent her an appealing glance as though to say: "I submit to this folly against my will," and then presently the spirit of frolic had laid hold of him and he was laughing and jesting as before. Dear Chris-

tian, dear boy! How could she ever have said that she did not like boys? Surely it was the youth in him which cried out to her so strongly. She loved him *now* — just as he was, for himself and not for the promise of the greatness to be.

The January dawn was filtering in through the shutters when at last she fell asleep, and it was with a violent start that she awoke two or three hours later to find Andrews standing by her bed, with an irate and perturbed face.

"I am sure I don't know whatever is the matter, Miss Juliet," she said. "I was for letting you have your sleep out, for you was that sound it did seem cruel to disturb you. I've been in two or three times and you never stirred, but the Countess thought it might be something important and the lady she keeps askin' and askin'."

An imperative tap caused her to break off, and the door opening to an impatient hand gave admittance to the spare form of Annola Istó. Juliet sat up, her eyes heavy though they were with slumber, dilating themselves in astonishment and alarm.

"Has anything happened?" she cried; "is Christian ill?"

"Christian is quite well, thank you," responded

the other with forced calm though her lips were pale. "I merely wished to lose no time in speaking with you on a matter of importance. As your repose seemed likely to last indefinitely, and I had already waited some time, I thought I might venture to disturb you."

"It's all right, Andrews," said Juliet, turning to her maid, who still stood firmly planted by her couch, actuated apparently by some dim intuition that her mistress needed protection. "People often do receive visits in their bedrooms in this country though I can't help feeling that it is rather disrespectful," she added, turning to her newcomer with a little nervous laugh.

The remark was received in silence, and Andrews after placing a chair, reluctantly withdrew.

Annola did not seem to notice the maid's attention, but went forward, still in silence, till she reached the foot of Juliet's bed, where she took up her position, staring at the girl with sombre eyes. Never had Juliet appeared so much of a child as now, with her ruffled fair locks curling round her little flushed face, the wide lace frills of her nightgown falling away from her white neck, her figure almost ethereally slight beneath the clinging cambric folds. As she gazed, Annola's hand went involuntarily to

her own throat, and encountering its leanness dropped again as though stung. Still she did not speak, and Juliet unable any longer to brook those glowering eyes, stammered confusedly:

"Christian — I suppose Christian has told you?"

"He has told me nothing, but I guessed; and now I know."

Once more that strange terrible silence. Juliet glanced up at the gaunt set face with a fear that was almost physical, and yet with an odd sense of compassion.

"You are angry," she said pleadingly, after a pause. "Do not be angry! After all he need not love you less because he loves me."

Annola's thin hands clutched the bedpost savagely; she looked at the girl as though she would have slain her.

"Love!" she exclaimed in a strangled voice. "It is not a question of love, nor even — what is much more important in my eyes — of broken faith, of betrayed confidence. It simply means the end of his career."

Juliet felt herself turn pale, but she gathered up all her courage, and looked her enemy — for such she intuitively felt Annola to be — full in the face.

"I do not see why that need be," she said

gently. "It will not harm him to love me, on the contrary it may help him."

"You fool!" cried the other violently. "I can excuse your ignorance of the claims of Art, but that you should pretend to know Christian and yet imagine that this silly affair, coming just at this crucial moment, will not certainly unsettle and most probably ruin him — bah! I have no patience with you!"

Juliet clasped and unclasped her hands nervously, but she did not answer.

"Let me tell you," went on Annola, vehemently, "Art is a jealous mistress and will not be content with a divided heart. He who would woo her must devote his life to her — every thought, every feeling, every aspiration — above all at the outset. As for Christian, you who have seen so much of him of late," — here those deepset eyes of hers seemed positively to shoot forth flames, — "have you not yet found out what he is? Excitable, impressionable, weak! This *fancy* of his will pass, no doubt," — with a sneer, — "but coming *now*, at a moment when it is essential that he should devote his whole soul, his entire energies to his work, it will most certainly do him irreparable injury. He loves you, or thinks he loves you," she went on after a

momentary pause, "and you no doubt imagine that you love him, and yet you would do him this injury."

Juliet's heart was sinking lower and lower. She threw out her hands as though to ward off a blow.

"Injure him!" she cried. "I! Oh, no, no."

Annola stamped impatiently.

"Oh, no, no!" she echoed sardonically; "and yet you do it. That is not love! *I* love him as he should be loved. I can make sacrifices for him — I can efface myself for him. I toil unwearyingly for his sake. I submit to his coldness and his ingratitude, and work for him still. I have always pushed him on. And *you*, what would you do? You would clasp those weak foolish arms of yours about him and drag him down; you would hang upon him — a clog, so that he must become as impotent as yourself. I tell you, if you really loved him you would set him free."

Juliet gazed at her dizzily. Was this fierce cruel woman speaking the truth? Was this wonderful new sweet dream indeed so selfish and hurtful? Like a flash her memory went back to that little episode of the previous evening: Christian turning round on the piano-stool and dropping his inert hands, "I cannot play

to-night." He could not play — because of her.

Annola, quick to read her face, observed that she had made an impression, and continued in a gentler tone:

"Your own common-sense must prove to you that I am right. You must see for yourself that Christian has become fitful and idle. He does not study regularly; he displeases his master. He is irritable, unsettled — never to be depended on from one moment to another. Is this the spirit in which a young artist should prepare himself for his life's work? Every month — what do I say — every *day* is now of importance. He ought to devote himself heart and soul to his studies, now more than ever, yet he only pursues them in a desultory fashion. He is dreamy, listless — ach —" she struck her forehead. "I tell you if this goes on, his whole future will be wrecked."

"I said we were too young," said Juliet, half to herself; her lip trembled and there were tears in her voice.

But a short time ago she had smiled to herself over the thought of this divine youth, but now each one of Annola's words fell upon her heart like lead. She had been so proud to think that she was to help him, to encourage

him, to be the promoter of his highest and best. Not — what was it the woman said? — to be a clog on him, to drag him down.

"What do you want me to do?" she said almost in a whisper.

Annola leaned forward, her face livid in its eagerness.

"I want you to give him up," she said. "Give him up now, at once, that no further precious time may be lost."

"But — but he will not give me up," cried Juliet. Her voice sounded harsh and strange in her own ears, her head was in a whirl; she felt as though a blinding, choking darkness were closing in upon her, but made one last desperate effort towards the light. Even if she were to sacrifice herself, Christian would not permit it.

"If you are in earnest he will have to give you up. Now listen to me; I am speaking to you as if you were not the child that you are, but a woman. I am willing to believe" — her voice vibrated with her earnestness — "that you *do* love Christian, and I appeal to you because of your love to save him from himself. Leave him, go away from him; put it out of his power to divide his allegiance. When you are gone — when he is unable either to see or to write

to you, for he must be ignorant of your address — he will become sane again; his art will once more be all in all to him."

"Do you mean that I must never see him again?" said Juliet, with a gasp.

"You — you," broke out Annola and paused choking. A wave of blind, unreasoning fury had suddenly swept over her. How dared she — the little creature, the foolish baby — look at her with that stricken face? What could she know of the anguish of baffled love? But after a moment she forced back the scathing retort that had risen to her lips and shrugged her shoulders; after all, better humour the child. "Never — that is a big word. In future perhaps, when he stands firm, when his success is assured — "

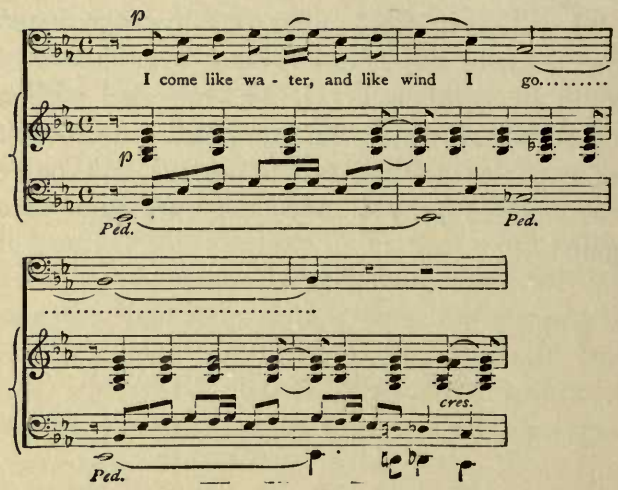
"No," said Juliet, hopelessly. "It is the end. If I part from him now so unkindly — if I break off all communication with him — it must be the end. Will you please go away now?" she added, dropping back on her pillows. "I want to be alone — I must think."

"I do not leave you until you have given me your word. You must choose. On the one hand there is your own selfish gratification, the satisfaction of Christian's passing whim — and the blighting of his life. On the other, self-

sacrifice, a little pain — perhaps even great pain" — watching the girl narrowly — "and the consciousness that you have saved him from destruction."

"I will do it," said Juliet, in a low, exhausted voice; then, as Annola bent over her and would have taken her hand, she cried with a vehemence of which the other had not thought her capable: "Don't touch me! Don't come near me! I pray I may never see your face again!"

CHAPTER IX



"I CANNOT understand it," said Professor Lennox. "The affair seems to me to grow more and more complicated. Countess de Galphi's telegram throws no light at all upon the matter — in fact, I can't make out what she means. If it were not for this abominable gout I should start at once for Stättingen."

As he spoke he glanced ruefully at the swathed limb stretched out stiffly before him,

and groaned, partly with pain and partly because of his perturbation of mind.

"Let me see the telegram," said Horace Bulkeley.

"There they are — both of them. That is Juliet's on the little table."

Bulkeley unfolded the paper and read slowly: "*I beg of you let me come to you at once. Most urgent.* Yes, she certainly seems in earnest, and now the Countess's in answer to yours, I suppose?"

"Yes, in answer to mine, asking if Juliet were ill, and requiring an explanation."

"*Juliet quite well,*" read Horace. "*Pay no attention. Only a label.* Surely there must be a mistake — it cannot be 'label.'"

"I have been racking my brain over that word," said the Professor, fretfully. "It certainly is 'label,' but it makes no sense."

"I will go down to the post-office and have the wire repeated," said Horace, soothingly. "They are a little uncertain about their English, you know; there must be a mistake. Meanwhile do not," he added hesitatingly, "do not distress yourself too much; after all, we know Miss Lennox is well, and that is the main point."

"I have never known her behave in such a

way," said Mr. Lennox, rolling his head restlessly on his cushions. "It cannot be merely a sudden aversion to Stättingen — yet certainly she did seem to take an unaccountable dislike to this place. What is to be done? I cannot encourage these caprices and yet — you see the child says *most urgent*."

"I will go to the post-office," said Horace, taking up his hat. "Try not to worry till I return."

But it is needless to say the Professor almost fretted himself into a fever during the hour-and-a-half which elapsed before his friend came back, and conjured up every conceivable misfortune which might be likely to account for Juliet's unexpected appeal.

"The word is *lubie*," said Horace, pausing beside the couch and smiling in spite of himself. "Is it not characteristic of Countess de Galphi? If we had borne her peculiarities in mind we might have remembered that it would be quite impossible to her to keep to her native tongue even in a telegram." He grew grave again, however, as he continued. "I met a telegraph boy on the steps just as I came back — he got here on his bicycle more quickly than I could. Perhaps this will throw a little light upon the matter."

The Professor took the neatly fastened paper quickly from his hand. "*Consent I implore of you. I would not ask without good reason.* I think I must give in, Bulkeley; but how on earth is it to be managed? I hardly like to let her come so far with no better escort than Andrews. It is not a very direct journey, and though Andrews is a good travelling maid, still of course, she cannot speak the language fluently. And Juliet is so young — I don't think it would do for her to travel all that way, practically unprotected."

"Would you allow me to go and fetch her?" said Bulkeley, answering the appeal in his eyes. "I should be delighted. I would set off at once so as to reach Stättingen to-morrow morning."

"My dear fellow, if you will do this for me," said Mr. Lennox, grasping his hand, "it will be a weight off my mind. It will be a proof of friendship which I shall not easily forget. Let us wire to the child at once, let us put her out of pain. After all, it will be nice to see her little face again — eh, Bulkeley?"

Horace assented cordially and withdrew to despatch the telegram and make his preparations for departure. He had proffered his services somewhat hesitatingly, being aware that

in so doing he was acting in a somewhat unconventional manner, but the Professor was accustomed to disregard the trammels of social observances when it seemed good to him, and, moreover, could never bring himself to realise that Juliet was no longer a child.

After many hours of incessant travelling Horace arrived at Stättingen, and was received by the Countess with a mixture of relief and indignation. Juliet was not in the room.

"I can't think what has come to the girl. She was as merry as a cricket until two days ago. As I said to my husband: 'La petite est gaie comme une cigale,' and now she has taken to shutting herself up, and pining, and moping, and refusing to say anything but that she must return to her father at once. It is the greatest dummheit. She was getting on so nicely with her German, and the life here was so educating for her. As I said, she was beginning to get rid of a little of the cotton-wool. But there is no use in arguing with her; she wants to get back to her bandbox."

"It certainly seems extraordinary," said Horace, seeing that something was expected of him, "but after all, outsiders cannot always judge. Miss Lennox has probably some private reason, which is a good one."

"Private fiddlesticks!" retorted the old lady. "A child of that age! N'est ce pas, Ignace, ce serait impossible pour une enfant comme Juliet d'avoir des raisons privées? Elle n'est pas capable d'avoir des raisons privées — comme je dis, elle a été gaie comme rien tout de temps."

"It is true," responded the Count, slowly. "Miss Juliet till this moment appeared to amuse herself well. She seemed to like the young society here. It is perhaps a — a little affair of the heart which has —" he paused — "which has how would one say? — échoué — chewed."

"Une affaire de cœur! Nonsense! bétise, mon ami."

The Count bowed and collapsed.

"I mean," continued Madame de Galphi, turning to Horace, "if it was a love affair, she wouldn't be in such a hurry to get away from the young man, would she?"

"Then there is a young man?" said Horace.

"There are two if it comes to that, though I think Christian Thal is the most favoured. You remember young Thal? a good-looking boy and a wonderful player, but conceited. He and Juliet apparently parted on the most friendly terms the very night before she took this fancy into her head. Well, and he has been here a dozen times since; he has been simply clamour-

ing for her, but she won't see him or the other one either. She won't come downstairs for fear of meeting them—she is altogether impossible. Fond as I am of her I am positively glad to have her taken off my hands. I am a little afraid of—of that, you know"— here she tapped her forehead meaningly; "brain, you understand—brain!"

"I think you need have no fears on that score," returned Bulkeley, with an indignation which he made no attempt to conceal.

"Don't be too sure," retorted the old lady, with her usual triumphant pessimism. "I shouldn't be a *bit* surprised at something of the kind in her father's daughter—genius and madness—you know. Too much brain on the one side and perhaps too little on the other. And, anyhow, Mr. Lennox is very odd himself."

Horace was in no mood to enter upon an argument, and the matter was suffered to drop. But he was even more disquieted than before; the Count's suggestion had confirmed his own private hypothesis. He remembered young Thal very well, and had formed his own opinion as to the cause of Juliet's depression after his departure from Schönwald.

The girl's appearance when, early on the following morning, she met him in the passage,

did not tend to reassure him. How pale the little face, what dark circles round the eyes — she looked years older than when he had parted from her, and yet there was a pathetic appealing helplessness about her that more than ever suggested the child.

"It was very good of you to come," she said hurriedly; "you have always been good to me. I wonder if — if you would do one more thing for me."

"What is it?" he asked in a voice which gave the required promise.

"I want you to come with me right up to the top of the house and to give a message."

"Are you there, Juliet?" called the Countess from the adjoining room. "I am pouring out your coffee."

"In one moment," answered Juliet. She ran noiselessly up the stairs, looking over her shoulder every now and then to see if Bulkeley was following, and indeed he kept close behind her. When they reached the topmost landing she paused breathless. "Do you see that door?" she whispered, pointing with her finger. "I want you to knock at it, and to tell M. Michotte who lives there to come to me for a moment."

Horace glanced at her keenly: was it after all not Thal, but this other?

"I only want to see him for a moment," she said with tremulous eagerness. "I shall be downstairs almost as soon as you are."

She turned so as to face the stairs while Horace hastened along the passage, and tapped loudly at the door which she had designated.

"Herein," cried a sleepy voice, and Horace obeying the summons found himself speedily in an icy garret chamber, where a swarthy shaggy-haired youth sat up in bed with astonishment.

Horace gave his message hastily in French, according to the stammered request of his host, after he had made a futile attempt to explain himself in German, and was immediately rewarded by the thud of Bobo's bare feet upon the floor.

"Be quick over your toilet," he advised somewhat grimly: "there is not much time to lose. Miss Lennox and I are leaving by the 6.30 train."

"Leaving! Just Heaven!" ejaculated Bobo, sinking on the side of his bed, and gazing at him with a drooping jaw.

"Yes, leaving. Come, make haste, Monsieur — Miss Lennox cannot wait."

"Just Heaven!" Bobo exclaimed again, making a wild plunge towards his garments, which lay in a disordered heap on a neighbouring chair.

"What a misfortune! Tell her, I pray you, that I will be with her in a moment. Leaving, sapristi!"

"It cannot be he," thought Bulkeley, as he closed the door. "Yet he is certainly very much overcome, and why should she wish to see him? Well, it is no affair of mine."

"He is coming," he announced, as Juliet turned anxiously towards him, and passing her, he ran swiftly down the stairs.

Almost immediately Bobo came hastening from his room, his face wilder than ever under his dishevelled hair.

"You are going!" he ejaculated, as he reached her. "Oh, Juliet, what does this mean?"

"I cannot tell you," she said, trying to steady her voice, and looking at him with eyes heavy with unshed tears. He took both her hands and wrung them silently; there were tears in his own eyes, and his honest, ugly face was working.

"It is Christian who will be in despair," he blurted out after a moment. "Poor fellow, he is already almost out of his mind because you will not see him. Why is it, Juliet? Has he offended you? But at least you will see him to say good-bye."

"I cannot," said Juliet. "Oh, Bobo, I can't explain — don't ask me. I want you to give him a message from me. Tell him that — No, tell him nothing, but give him this — give it to him after I am gone." She held out to him a folded paper, which, in his agitation, he clutched at. "You must hold it carefully — you must not crush it — he will know what it means."

"And is that all?" stammered Bobo.

"That is all. He will know. Good-bye, Bobo. Be kind to him."

She pressed his hands, and then withdrew her own, and hurried downstairs blindly.

She had already sped some distance on her way when Bobo fulfilled her last behest. He found Christian pale and heavy-eyed after a sleepless night, and told his tale haltingly and with many qualms, dreading the storm which as he thought must infallibly burst forth when his friend learnt Juliet's departure.

The silence with which the announcement was received, however, alarmed him more than an outbreak of fury or despair.

"She is gone," said Christian, in a lifeless voice, "gone without even saying farewell. You knew she was going, and you did not call me."

"It was her wish," faltered Bobo. "I could not have gone against her. She looked — as if she could bear no more. But she thought of you, Christian; she sent you a note."

"A note," echoed Christian, from between his set teeth. "How much do you think that comforts me when I may not even see her face or touch her hand? Oh, if you had not come that night! There," breaking off suddenly, "give it to me."

He had taken the paper quickly from the other's hand, but opened it reverently, with shaking fingers.

"She said you would know what it meant," said Bobo, as his friend turned the paper round and round.

It contained no words — only a dried flower.

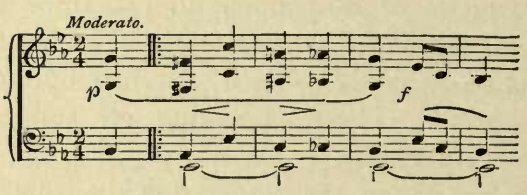
Christian's face lit up amid all its woe.

"Yes, I know what it means," he said, and pressed the little flower to his lips.

It was an Edelweiss.

PART III

CHAPTER I



SOME five years later a house party was assembled at a certain beautiful old Kentish Manor House for Eastertide; Sir Mark and Lady Shipley having offered a few of their friends a refuge from the intolerable desolation of town during the Bank Holidays. It was a somewhat mixed gathering: a Cabinet Minister; a personage from the War Office; a couple of Foreign Attachés; an American actress; a Society novelist; two pretty women whom everybody knew, and who were, in fact, related to the hostess; and two other pretty women whom not many people knew, but of whom it was prophesied that they would soon come to the front; a few smart young men of no particular avocation; and, lastly, Juliet Lennox. Juliet looking not so very much

older than when she had steamed away from Stättingen in the company of Horace Bulkeley, though she had put up her hair, and grown a little taller. One glance would have sufficed to indicate that her intelligence, at least, had developed to a remarkable degree; yet any friend of the child Juliet would have missed something in the face of the Juliet of to-day. It was, as ever, sweet and bright, but the confident, expectant expression which had characterised it of old was now absent.

"You never seem to look forward to anything," her hostess and cousin had said to her that very evening; "you, who always used to be building castles in the air. You've not lost your power of enjoyment, I hope?"

"Not at all," said Juliet, with a laugh. "I take things as they come, and if they are good things, I enjoy them very much."

"You live altogether in the present, in fact," returned the other; "you don't look forward to the future, and you don't look back upon the past; at least, I suppose you don't, but one never can tell with you — you are such a reserved little creature."

Juliet smiled, but said nothing. She and her father had only just returned to England after an absence of more than two years, and were

now settled in London, where they intended to pass the season, not so much on the girl's account as because Mr. Lennox, who was hard at work on a new book, wished to be within reach of the British Museum.

Dinner was over on the Monday evening and the women folk were gathered round the library fire, taking note of each other's dresses and talking in a somewhat desultory fashion.

Lady Shipley, who had been much bored by her companion at dinner, and who at all times discharged the duties of hostess in a somewhat vague and perfunctory manner, was leaning back in an armchair, extending one little embroidered shoe to the blaze and closing her eyes; the actress had betaken herself to one of the Louis Quinze mirrors which decorated the room, and producing a powder-puff from a little silver box, was diligently powdering her nose which, as she confided to the novelist on leaving the dining room, was, she felt, more lustrous than was becoming. The pretty women split up into couples, the two who were as yet a little uncertain of their position avoiding each other by mutual consent.

"Has anybody seen to-day's paper?" said Mrs. Pontefract, one of Lady Shipley's cousins, stifling a yawn.

"My dear," said Lady Mary Sherborne, "the idea of looking at a Bank Holiday paper!—as if it ever had anything in it, except the weather and Good Friday festivities for the people and all that sort of thing."

"Isn't there anything about the Drawing-room," said Mrs. Pontefract, "or about the Cranley divorce? I used to know Arthur Pembroke rather well, poor fellow; I don't believe it's his fault."

"There couldn't be anything going on about it now," said Lady Shipley, sleepily, from her armchair. "The courts don't sit, or whatever they call it."

"*Oh, oh, oh!*" cried Mrs. Pontefract, with sparkling eyes, "I have found something worth knowing though. Christian Thal is playing at Canterbury to-morrow."

Juliet, who had been describing sundry of her travels to the novelist, lost the thread of her discourse, and after an ineffectual attempt to recover herself turned round in her chair.

"A new pianist, I suppose," she said as quietly as she could.

Lady Mary had jumped up and crossed the room to her cousin's side, while Lady Shipley opened her eyes and became animated all at once.

"That divine creature!" she cried. "Are you sure, Theresa?"

"Perfectly," returned the other. "Here it is: 'Mr. Christian Thal, who is making a tour in the provinces previous to his recital in London, will play at Canterbury to-morrow; thence the talented artist proceeds to Dover; and he will also, we understand—'"

"Just my fate," exclaimed Lady Shipley. "To-morrow! And we are booked for these abominable races."

"Oh, but *must* we go," cried Mrs. Pontefract, "when that wondrous playing is to be heard only sixteen miles away?"

Lady Mary looked a little pensive, and presently remarked that though she was passionately fond of music, racing was very jolly too. "Particularly a point-to-point, when you know everybody that's ridin'," she added.

"There's no question about which we *must* do," said Lady Shipley, resignedly. "Mark would never hear of anything but the races; that's the worst of these hunting men, they are so narrow-minded. He wants to sell a horse or two besides."

"Have you heard Christian Thal, Ethel? Is he very good?" inquired Juliet, turning to her and speaking in rather a wavering voice.

There was a general outcry. "Good! My dear child, he's superb! Do you mean to say you have never heard of him?"

"Is this his first visit to England?" inquired Juliet. "You see, having been away for so long, I know very little of what's going on. We have spent about eighteen months in Japan — in remote parts, you know; my father would not have any English papers sent to us; he said it spoilt the charm and the illusion; so that I've often wondered how the world was wagging."

There was a general murmur of commiseration.

"I call that rather selfish," said Lady Mary. "Why, all sorts of things might have happened and you mightn't know. Your dearest friend might be dead and buried — or married." She added naively, "One is nearly as bad as the other."

"We haven't got many friends," said Juliet. "I didn't really mind."

"You horrid little thing!" said Lady Mary; "you are getting nearly as unsociable as your father."

"Juliet is very nice," said Lady Shipley, languidly; "I like her all the better for not being like everybody else — it's quite refreshing."

"They give his programme in the *Times*," cried Mrs. Pontefract at this juncture. "He is playing the Waldstein — Heavens! And two of the most lovely Nocturnes that Chopin ever wrote!"

"You have not answered my question," said Juliet, gently. "Is this his first visit to England?"

"Here is this poor little Chin-chin asking for information," said Lady Mary. "No; by the way, you were in Japan, weren't you? Yum-Yum would be more appropriate. You are dreadfully behind the age, Yum-Yum, but we'll take pity on you. Christian Thal came to England a year ago and took the world by storm; he had already been very well received on the Continent, and he has since been to America, so that except in Japan, I suppose, he has been heard of all over the world. I don't pretend to admire his playing myself so much as Voslau's. There is power if you like."

"Yes," interrupted Mrs. Pontefract, hastily, "sledge-hammer power. They call him the 'Harmonious Blacksmith,' don't they? And then he's such an ugly fellow. Now Thal is beautiful — no other word describes him."

Here Mrs. Leslie, one of the smart nobodies who had been sedulously making up to Lady

Mary during the evening, took up the cudgels in defence of her protégé.

"But surely the immense nervous energy, don't you know, in Voslau's face atones for any irregularity of feature. Ah, when he lifts those great glowing eyes of his and brings down his hands on the piano in a mighty chord — *bang* — it is magnificent."

"I can't bear him," said Lady Shipley, faintly.

"Ah, you are like me," put in Mrs. Malmesbury Smith, Mrs. Leslie's rival, "what I seek first of all in music is delicacy — that ethereal charm, you know, such as Ghyschy has with the violin. One hears his very soul as it were escaping from his finger-tips. Now *he* has a lovely face, if you like. Once last year I gave him a tribute of flowers; I had been so carried away when I heard him before, don't you know, and so I ordered a great stand of crimson roses between five and six feet high. I chose crimson on purpose to suit his complexion — that exquisite dark, clear colouring — and to my delight he placed it just behind him. It threw him out so you can't think; and there was a kind of poetical charm in seeing his figure outlined against the background of flowers."

"I always think musicians are very much bored by these floral offerings," said Lady Mary, who had not found herself able to foregather, as she expressed it, with Mrs. Malmesbury Smith, and who considered her distinctly over-dressed. "I remember seeing a man once — I can't remember who it was now, but he was an immense celebrity. Some admirer had presented him with a wreath of laurel as big as a cart-wheel, with long green silk streamers, and he just trundled it off the stage, or whatever you call it, by the extreme end of one of them. He looked so cross."

"What a programme! oh, what a programme!" exclaimed Mrs. Pontefract, looking up from the paper. "Ethel, I can't go to those races —positively I can't. I couldn't be such a Goth when Thal is playing only a few miles away. I must go and hear him, whatever everybody else does."

"Well, you can't walk sixteen miles, you know," returned her cousin, tranquilly, "and you can't have any horses. I'm very sorry, my dear, but we shall want them all, I'm afraid."

"Isn't there a carrier's cart or a baker's van or something or other in the village?" inquired Mrs. Pontefract, eagerly. "If I have to charter a donkey-cart, I'll go."

"Why not the Vicarage pill-box," put in Lady Mary, somewhat sarcastically. "I am sure Mrs. Perkins would lend it to you. Her horse is only seventeen, and you would have to walk up all the hills, but you could get to Canterbury if you started early enough!"

"Do you mean that covered wagonette thing?" said Mrs. Pontefract, brightening up. "That's an idea! As you say, I *could* get there in time. Who will come with me? You, Juliet. I know you are passionately fond of music and I'm sure you don't care about races."

"How can I be so rude as to say I don't?" stammered Juliet.

"As if any of us cared about races — except perhaps Mary," said Lady Shipley, plaintively. "We are only going from a sense of duty; people expect it, and Mark would be furious if we didn't. But you are not bound to come, Juliet; I'm sure I shouldn't if I were you."

Mrs. Pontefract clapped her hands and made a little spring expressive of delight.

"You'll come, you'll come! I'll share my pill-box with you, and you'll be more ravished than you ever were in your life. You cannot even conceive what he is like."

"Don't make me more envious than I am already," said Lady Shipley. "I never have

any luck; I missed his last recital on account of 'flu.' But I have heard him once, and he transported me to another world. I felt so happy and so good. Mark said I was a perfect angel for nearly a fortnight afterwards. He said he only wished I could hear him oftener."

"So you are coming," said Mrs. Pontefract, addressing Juliet in a satisfied tone. "That's very sweet of you. As a reward I'll play to you by and by when the men come in."

Lady Mary made a grimace at Lady Shipley, unseen by their mutual cousin.

"I thought we were going to play games," she murmured. "I know a ripping new one; Kitchen Spoons—have you ever played Kitchen Spoons?"

Lady Shipley shook her head without enthusiasm.

"Oh, it's screamingly funny," cried the other. "Somebody's blindfolded, you know, and everybody changes places, and he goes up to somebody and taps him all over with two kitchen spoons. Then he has to guess—it's ripping."

"I don't think I should like it," said her cousin, languidly; "but I wish Theresa wouldn't play. We've been talking of Christian Thal, and I've got his music in my head, and she'll take away the flavour of it."

"She's determined to play," returned Lady Mary, somewhat acidly; "better set her to work as soon as possible and get it over."

Mrs. Pontefract was considered, and indeed not without grounds, an exceptionally good amateur, and Juliet remembered having listened to her of old with considerable pleasure. She was glad enough on the present occasion when her cousin sat down at the piano; the music might tranquillise her thoughts, and would at least relieve her of the necessity of further conversation. Though Mrs. Pontefract took it for granted that she would accompany her on the morrow, she had not as yet agreed to do so, and was in truth sorely exercised in her mind on the subject. An immense longing to see Christian again, to hear him, to witness his triumphs, battled with a shrinking reluctance to make one of the crowd, to hearken to its meaningless admiration, to stand afar off while he received the ovation of the indifferent. How could she bear it? She, Juliet, who had been enthroned in his heart of hearts, to whom he had once laid bare every secret aspiration of his soul? She welcomed therefore the little breathing space; yet when Mrs. Pontefract played the opening bars of Chopin's Ballade in A flat she was in imminent

danger of breaking down. The performance was very creditable, evincing genuine feeling and good execution. Mrs. Pontefract possessed what the initiated among her friends called "a wonderful natural finger," and if her bass was occasionally a little erratic she was careful to keep the pedal down so that hardly anybody noticed her slips.

Lady Mary, however, was one of the exceptions, and was determined her dear friend and cousin should be made aware of the fact.

"Such a jolly thing," she remarked, "isn't it? That sort of hoppy part in the middle always reminds me of a man driving along a lame donkey. By the way, somebody told me a good story the other day. You'll like it, Theresa — it's a musical one. It's about Rubinstein, he often played wrong notes, you know — isn't it a comfort to think these big men play wrong notes just like anybody else? Well, he was giving a concert somewhere or other, and he had to finish up with an awfully difficult piece ending with a run all the way up; and he missed the very last note of all — wasn't it hard luck? Well, he was simply furious, and when he was recalled — people nearly standing on their heads with enthusiasm, don't you know — he simply wouldn't go back. They

clapped, and shouted, and shrieked, and whistled, but he wouldn't. At last, however, somebody fairly pushed him on the platform, and then what do you think he did? He just marched up to the piano, thumped the note that he had missed, bowed to the audience and went away. The audience was so delighted it nearly devoured him."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Sir Mark, much impressed, "good chap that; it's like taking a horse back to a hurdle he's refused."

"Awfully jolly story," said a young man who had dropped down beside Lady Mary on the sofa.

"Yes, I can't imagine why I thought of it now," returned she, innocently. "Isn't it rather nice, Theresa?"

"Splendid," rejoined her cousin, moving away from the piano with a heightened colour.

"Now, what shall we play?" cried Lady Mary, with animation. "It's a bore that Ethel doesn't like Kitchen Spoons. Let's play Clumps, and you and I will go out. I'm reservin' another clippin' game for later on — it has to be played when the bedroom candles are lighted. Do you know The Ghost? Don't tell them if you do. 'Twill be such fun to send Lord —— sprawling on his back."

The rest of the evening was spent in the intellectual manner common to gatherings of the kind.

Juliet joined with the rest in asking strings of questions, and blowing a feather into the air, and playing Animal Grab. When Lady Mary, impersonating a spectre, had by a series of hollow-voiced instructions persuaded the assembled guests to stand side by side waving their hands aimlessly and balancing themselves insecurely on one leg, she formed one of the band; and when the lively young woman, taking advantage of their defenceless attitude, had by means of an adroit push to the Cabinet Minister sent the whole party reeling to the floor, she had tumbled down with the rest, and picked herself up somewhat bruised and shaken, but feigning like everybody else to be much entertained by the amusing surprise.

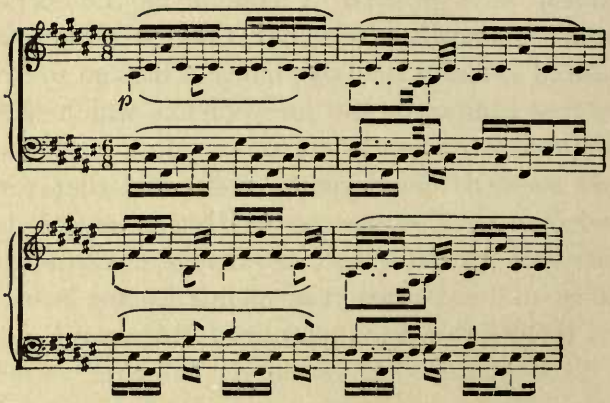
But how unreal it all seemed; how unmeaning the glitter and clatter of Vanity Fair; the small talk, the petty jealousies, the rivalries — how senseless above all the prattle about music and musical matters. Not thus had the real devotees of the sacred art sought to plumb its depths and scale its heights in that far-away time when she had found herself in their midst.

A gay irresponsible time enough to all appearance, but moulding how many great ambitions and high hopes!

How strange that it should be no echo from the artistic world but the foolish good-natured voice of Society that had broken in for the first time upon the long silence which had enshrouded her soul's secret.

It seemed like desecration to her that the tremendous news was to be thus announced: Christian had fulfilled his destiny; Christian armed and equipped at all points for the battle, had thrown down his gauntlet to the world.

CHAPTER II



IMMEDIATELY after breakfast the "pill-box," as Lady Mary irreverently named the Vicar's covered wagonette, arrived at the door. An urgent appeal had been despatched to Mrs. Perkins at early dawn, and she had good-naturedly consented to lend the vehicle, though the sixteen miles journey was considered beyond the powers of the ancient horse. Another had, however, been procured from one of Sir Mark's tenants; a useful beast, shaggy of fetlock and heavy of limb, employed chiefly for farm work. He tilted up the shafts in rather an unpleasant fashion, but as Mrs. Ponte-

fract remarked, the main point was to get to Canterbury; any little inconvenience that they might suffer would be more than recompensed by the delights of the afternoon.

Many times during the course of a sleepless night had Juliet told herself that it would be folly, and worse than folly, to submit to an ordeal not only painful in itself but bound to cause her many future heartburnings; yet nevertheless at the last she had found herself unable to resist the temptation of acceding to her cousin's appeal.

The drive was wearisome in the extreme; the rough trot of the farm horse jolting them in a manner that after a time became almost excruciating; the "pill-box" was very stuffy and hot, and its small windows rattled in an irritating fashion. Mrs. Pontefract, who was a tall woman, was obliged to sit with her head at an uncomfortable angle to keep her hat from being hopelessly flattened against the low roof; notwithstanding which she chattered unceasingly, and with imperturbable good-humour.

After regaling Juliet with a minute account of her own musical prowess and the successes which attended it, she proceeded to animadvert, with a kind of jovial contempt, on the follies and peculiarities of Lady Mary Sherborne.

"Poor dear thing, she is too charming for words, but rather empty-headed, don't you think? I'm sure a serious girl like you, Juliet, must find her empty-headed. She cares about nothing but admiration, and is always trying to put herself en evidence. That is why she is always so keen on playing those idiotic little games. She can't do anything else, poor darling; she pretends she's fond of music, but she doesn't know anything about it really, as you can see. Such nonsense about Voslau; she doesn't know a thing about Voslau; she went to hear him once with some special friend of hers, and he admired him, and so she thought it was the proper thing to do. He probably admired him because he was so ugly; no man can stand a handsome musician — too absurd, isn't it? Men are awfully jealous, you know. My poor old Jack is perfectly rabid. The only thing he can find to say about a really good musician is, 'Why doesn't he cut his hair?' If ever I want to make him *really* cross, I tell him Christian Thal is an Apollo."

"Yes?" returned Juliet, with more animation than she had hitherto shown. "Yes?"

"He really is, you know. It's not only that he's statuesque; but altogether he is the very impersonation of a young god. A sort of

majestic impassiveness, don't you know, as if he were miles and miles above one, and then when he plays and one sees his face kindle — the divine fire coming through — I always think that some day I shall go down on my knees and worship."

Juliet's thoughts were far away by the time her cousin had reached the end of her speech. She was back again under the plane-tree outside the Schöne Aussicht; she saw in imagination her father leaning upon Christian's shoulders and heard his voice. "*When people talk idly about sacred fire and the Divine Afflatus, they do not realise that they are indeed speaking the truth. Such genius as yours is an emanation from the very Spirit of God.*"

Had Christian already begun to fulfil his high vocation? Surely, her cousin's idle words hinted at the power that her father had divined in him; a deeper nature than hers would have been uplifted by it, impelled to worship — not the man himself, not even his art, but the spirit that breathed through it, the Divine Beauty, that Beauty "ever ancient and ever new" which alone creates and vivifies. Her heart swelled within her; happy proud tears filled her eyes.

Mrs. Pontefract prattled on, and Juliet leant

back in her corner, responding by an occasional monosyllable, but inwardly revolting at the babble which thus broke in upon her thoughts, thoughts so soul-stirring, so sacred. It was a relief to her when they at last reached the town, and Mrs. Pontefract, who was by this time exceedingly hungry, turned all her attention to luncheon. Yet, when, in the coffee room of their hotel, Juliet chanced to overhear scraps of conversation at the neighbouring tables, Christian's name passing from mouth to mouth, his personality discussed, his playing criticised, she suddenly realised that she had undertaken more than she could bear. She grew red and pale by turns, and when she and her cousin sallied into the street, where placards announcing the recital greeted her eyes at every corner, she clutched desperately at her companion's arm.

"I — I feel faint," she cried, "I must give the concert up; I know it would be too much for me."

"But, my *dear*, what a disappointment!" ejaculated Mrs. Pontefract, aghast. "After coming all that way. You do look very white, I must say. What is to be done with you? It was all that horrid stuffy little machine. What will you do?" — staring blankly at her, and

casting about in her mind as to the easiest manner of disposing of her. "Suppose we go back to the hotel and get a room for you? You could lie down quite comfortably until after the concert. You'd be all right, wouldn't you?"

"I don't think I'll do that," returned Juliet. "I prefer to remain in the air, thanks. I just feel I could not endure the closeness of the concert hall. I'll stroll about the Cathedral grounds and the cloisters."

"Do, dear," said the other, eagerly; "take great care of yourself. Suppose we meet at the hotel at five for tea? I may be a few minutes late, as he is sure to have five or six encores. But you won't mind that, will you? You can order tea, you know, and have it all ready."

Juliet agreed, and hastened away in the direction of the Cathedral. Entering the building itself, and seeking a retired corner, she sank into a seat, covering her face with her hands.

How foolish, she said to herself over and over again, how wrong to be so much upset. Christian was not hers, would never be hers; the laughing prophecy made of old was now fulfilled; he belonged to the world: the world had a right to do what it would with its own.

No need for her to resent this fancied profanation of what had been to her an inner shrine. She, too, might stand afar off if she would and admire and applaud with the multitude.

"Never, never," she cried to herself while hot tears forced their way through her fingers.

After a time she grew calmer, and began to wander about the vast building; its majestic beauty impressed her with a sense of settled peace. Kneeling presently on the hallowed stone worn away by generations of pilgrims, she sent up her prayer as earnestly as any petitioner who had ever knelt there. A voiceless prayer indeed, but intensely human: the cry of her sore heart for help and strength; and mingled with this yet another appeal for blessings on the beloved.

By-and-bye feeling vaguely soothed and comforted, she strolled out into the cloisters, and there remained, now wandering up and down, her thoughts busy the while with Christian's doings, now standing still, looking about her at the quiet beauty of the place.

All at once the sound of a rapid step came echoing along some unseen passage, and she started, pressing her hands together. After a moment she laughed. How absurd the fancy that it resembled Christian's! What should

bring him to the cloisters? Besides, his concert could scarcely yet be at an end.

But the step came nearer, and, as she held her breath, a door opened at the further end of the colonnade, and a figure passed through and advanced towards her. A tall man, half enveloped in a cloak, one end of which was thrown carelessly over his shoulder; a man walking quickly, looking with apparent interest from side to side, and carrying his hat in his hand, so that the spring sunshine filtering in through the pillars fell full upon his uncovered head.

Juliet stood transfixed, unable to breathe, much less to cry out, and presently Christian Thal, bringing down his eyes from the roof, caught sight of her and stood absolutely still. After a moment's pause he came hurrying towards her with both hands outstretched.

"I knew I should find you some day," he said.

Her hands flew out to meet his, and lingered in his strong grasp.

"I knew I should find you," he repeated exultantly. "Wherever I go, my first thought is, 'Will she be there?' And when I find you are not there, I send out my music to greet you wherever you may be."

"Oh, Christian!" said Juliet, finding her voice at last with a great sob, "I thought you would have forgotten me."

"Forgotten you," echoed he; "I think there has not been a day — not an hour — that I have not thought of you. But why did you not come to hear me play to-day?"

"I could not," she answered. "I could not go just as one of the crowd."

"I should have singled you out," he replied. "For me, there would have been nobody there but you. I have been searching for you so long. Where have you been all these years?"

"We have been travelling for the most part," said she, her voice still wavering and uncertain, her luminous eyes full of almost incredulous joy. "We spent nearly two years in Japan, cut off from all connection with home. Think of it, Christian! Until last night I did not even know of your success."

She had withdrawn her hands, but of a sudden laid one again upon his sleeve, crying out with a tender little laugh that somehow had a suggestion of tears in it.

"Cæsar! Cæsar! and so you have conquered the world!"

Even as she spoke there flashed across her the thought of how he would have received

such a speech of old; with what boyish elation, what unconcealed consciousness of his own worth. But the man Christian gazed back at her with a gravity almost sad.

"Ah, Juliet," he said, "how little I knew in those early days. How much there is to learn — how much there is to do. I am only at the beginning; I have only climbed a little way. I will go on — I must go on, but shall I ever reach the top?"

"Surely," cried she, "you have changed."

"The higher one climbs," he said, "the more clearly one sees. Peak upon peak seem to tower above one — "

He broke off suddenly, smiled, and stooping kissed the little hand that rested on his arm.

"I have something here to show you," he went on in an altered voice; "something that will interest you."

Casting aside his cloak he unfastened a locket from his watch-chain, and handed it to her. It was of plain gold, except in the centre whereon was a tiny scroll of white enamel, bearing in minute letters the words *In Excelsis.*

"Open it," he said; "press that spring" — touching an almost imperceptible projection at one side.

Juliet obeyed, and the locket flew open, dis-

closing beneath the crystal within a little Edelweiss.

"You remember it?" he said.

"Is it — mine?" asked Juliet, falteringly.

"Could it be any other? It has been my star all these years."

Juliet's heart beat fast and her form visibly trembled. Surely now the moment had come which she had so often dreamed of. He would speak: he would exact an explanation of her desertion of him; he would reproach her perhaps — how could she bear to be reproached by Christian, now, above all, in this moment of reunion?

She threw out both her hands with a gesture that was almost childish in its piteous appeal.

"Not now," she cried; "oh, Christian, say nothing now — let us only remember that we have met."

He had been looking at her with a curious, troubled expression, but at her words his face softened and brightened with an extraordinary tenderness.

"There is no need for words between us two," he murmured; then, smiling: "And so you would not come to hear me play? Well, I must come to you — I must come and play just for you alone. When shall I come? Do you live near here?"

"No. I am staying with friends just now, but I return to London in a day or two."

"Ah, that is well," he said; "I, too, go back very soon. I will come to see you on Thursday."

She gave him her address and he made a mental note of it, adding, "I will come and see you in the afternoon; no, I think the morning — the morning is better; it is also sooner."

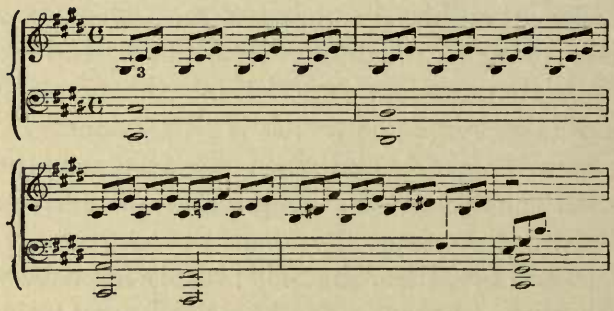
Both laughed, and then he fastened the locket on his chain again, and once more kissed Juliet's hand.

"Good-bye, then," he said; "only for a very little time. I must go or I shall miss my train. My poor impressario is probably tearing his hair at the station, thinking I have given him the slip. I am to meet one of your great critics to-night, and he is very anxious. For myself I do not think it matters much: it is not the critics who make a musician."

This was said without petulance or the faintest trace of the naïve vanity which had characterised him of old, but with the dispassionate calmness of one who states an obvious fact.

"Only for a short time," he repeated, smiling once more brightly; and then he left her, Juliet watching his tall figure as it made its way through alternate patches of shade and sunlight to the end of the colonnade and there vanished.

CHAPTER III



JULIET sat alone on the morning after her return to town in the big sunshiny drawing-room where she reigned supreme. She had chosen to receive Christian in this room because of the piano, a beautiful Erard, with which her father had presented her knowing that music was one of her chief delights.

Her figure, sunk in the depths of an armchair designed to sustain some portly matron, looked almost ethereally slight and small; there was even a certain pathetic suggestion of loneliness about it. She seemed so much too young to be the sole mistress of the big house, the great empty room. She had indeed already conveyed some impress of her personality to this chamber

which before her advent had been bleak and stiff enough. Her own knick-knacks lay here and there, and many precious and curious mementos of recent travels. The draperies were all light in colour, and every available corner was full of spring flowers; the windows opening on to a balcony which was positively banked with them.

Christian, entering presently, took in these details at a glance and with a distinct sensation of pleasure. For the first time he saw his love in her own home, and he was curiously glad that it should be so artistic and even so luxurious. Anything ugly or commonplace would have been out of harmony with her dainty presence.

She rose to meet him with a bright smile, and he took her hands in his without speaking; then he turned to the piano and sat down at it at once, running his fingers over the keys with a satisfied air.

She crossed the room and placed herself near him. He raised his eyes and gazed at her for one moment; and then he began to play.

As of old she saw the music take hold of him, envelop him, absorb him. There were many differences between the music of the boy Christian with its precocious power, its promise, its fitfulness, and this music of the developed artist, the

Master; but at first Juliet could scarcely mark them, so moved, so intoxicated was she by the message which it conveyed to her—to her alone. All this passion of exquisite sound, this revelation of undreamed-of beauty, these heights and depths of wonder and delight were for her. Even while she marvelled it seemed to be made clear to her that she was the source of his inspiration and that his love for her made him what he was.

At length he paused, and again their eyes met; hers were full of tears.

"Oh, Christian," she said, "I am not worthy."

She scarcely realised that she had spoken. It was her thought answering that which she had divined in him.

"Did I not tell you once," he said dreamily, "that if ever I preached it should be your gospel? It will be to you that the world will listen as much as to me."

His hands dropped upon the keys again, and he played once more, keeping his eyes, however, upon her face and but half surrendering himself to his theme. Indeed, it seemed as though his fingers strayed over the keys idly—as it were jestingly; his glance, too, was full of tender archness. Juliet smiled, but felt more near to tears, for the faint and delicate sounds

that fell upon her ears were echoes from the past, bringing with them memories full of a poignant sweetness.

One by one Christian's magic art raised up these melodious ghosts; now a fragment from Rubinstein's Mélodie; now the motif of two or three of Liadow's Dances; now the Andante of the Moonlight Sonata. All were rendered pianissimo, as it were breathed. His expression and attitude were those of a man who makes use of some well-remembered and oft-repeated quotation to illustrate his thought, and whose mind is too busy with the thought itself to pay much heed to the beauty of the words. But, presently, as he watched the play of Juliet's mobile face, his mood changed. He drew away his hands abruptly from the keys, dropping his head at the same time for a moment on his breast; then, seeming to recover himself, he became absorbed in the music once more, and it pealed forth under his touch, grand, solemn, ecstatic, a pæan of unearthly joy and triumph.

When the last note died away he stood up:

"I must go," he said, "I have much work to do to-day. I must also work to-morrow — all day. But at night I can come. I will come about half-past nine and play to you again."

He spoke quite simply as if the proposition

were the most natural thing in the world, and Juliet answered in the same tone.

"At half-past nine. That will be perfect. My father does not often work after dinner, and will be free to listen to you. I want him to hear you again."

He smiled and went away without even touching her hand, without, indeed, any attempt at leave-taking; they might have been people living in the same house, and parting for a few hours.

Juliet remained standing as it were transfixed, with burning cheeks and ice-cold trembling hands; presently she began to weep from pure gladness of heart.

Thus her father found her when he came in presently to inquire who had been her visitor.

"I thought I heard the piano," he added; then, catching sight of her tear-stained face, "Why, child, what is the matter?"

She ran towards him and threw her arms round his neck:

"Nothing, only that I am so happy. He has been here — Christian — Christian Thal."

"Ah!" said the Professor. He drew her more closely to him, and felt her heart throbbing beneath his hand. Her little hot cheek was pressed against his, she was trembling in every limb.

"I met him on Tuesday," whispered Juliet; "he told me he was coming. I wanted to tell you, but I — I — "

"I know," said her father, very softly.

This child of his was child no longer, but a woman; to her had come suddenly the crowning joy and glory of a woman's life: she loved and was beloved. Even while he folded her in his arms this thought struck to the father's heart; such a little fragile creature, and yet beyond his control. Rigidly guarded, jealously watched over, with hardly a thought, as he had imagined, that he had not, as it were, sanctioned; yet in spite of all she had outwitted him: love was here in full possession.

"After all these years," went on Juliet, brokenly.

"All these years," he echoed in a somewhat toneless voice. All these years when he had deemed her so happy.

"You know when I went away from Stättingen," she continued, "I could not tell you much about it. I — I was too miserable."

"Of course," he agreed soothingly.

"You were so good, Daddy — you did not question me."

No, he had not questioned her; he had left her to do battle alone with a trouble which he

had thought half-imaginary, wholly childish. But now — the tone in which she said "all these years" was a revelation to him.

"I thought then," whispered Juliet, "I was told — that anything between me and him would be a hindrance to his career; and so I came away."

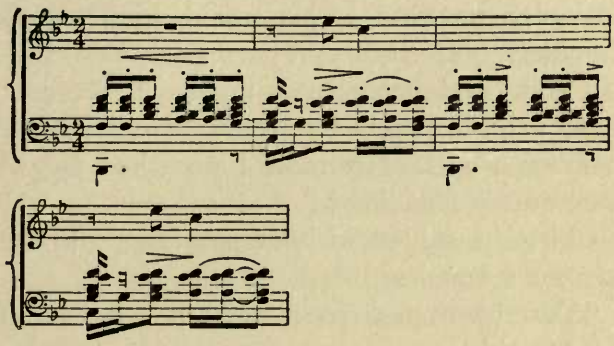
"I see," commented the Professor.

Yes, she had consulted no one, she had made this tremendous sacrifice all by herself, without a word of advice, of help, of even sympathy from her father, her father whose mission in life was, as he conceived, to lead and succour the ignorant and afflicted. Well, well, life had taught him many strange lessons, but none perhaps so strange as this.

"But now," she went on, her clasp involuntarily tightening itself round his neck, her cheek pressed even closer, her voice wavering in its eager joy, "now his career is assured. Now — now — he is free."

She broke off. Her father kissed her in silence, with exceeding tenderness but with a sinking heart. Not for worlds would he have breathed a word to overshadow her young ecstasy; he would not even brush away the bloom from a joy that was all the more exquisite because as yet intangible, undefined, by formulating his thought aloud; but within himself he said: "My bird will leave its nest."

CHAPTER IV



THE next evening Christian came, according to his promise, and the Professor greeted him with affectionate warmth. He proceeded to question the young man quietly enough, though he watched him eagerly the while, jealously anxious to prove his worthiness of the treasure which was, as he now felt assured, to be sooner or later committed to his keeping.

Christian bore the ordeal well, answering readily yet withal modestly, having lost every trace of the almost unconscious egotism, the too-confident conviction of his own genius which had before occasionally grated on his

friends. His boyish self-esteem had fallen from him like a garment; the man stood revealed — the Master. As the Professor drew him out, his own countenance softened more and more; presently he rose and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Your soul has grown, my boy!" he said; then, wringing him by the hand — "You remember a certain sermon I preached to you one autumn morning?"

Christian smiled without speaking, and Mr. Lennox seemed satisfied.

"You have perhaps already put it into effect?" said he.

"I am beginning," said Christian.

"Well, remember," went on the old man, "if your text is to be *Sursum Corda*, your own heart must first be lifted up. You must dwell always in the high places."

Christian smiled again, and went to the piano, and as the Professor listened, he felt his own heart at rest.

Christian played far into the night, and rising at last, was making his way unceremoniously towards the door when Mr. Lennox arrested him.

"I had forgotten to ask you something. What about your friend — your clever friend

who interested me so much? You have not mentioned her name."

Christian turned and slowly retraced his steps to the centre of the room, his eyes being fixed with apparent abstraction upon the floor. His face was very dark and moody.

As the Professor repeated his question, he looked up with a start.

"Oh, Annola is always there," he said. His eyes wandered round the room, at first half-absently, but presently, when they rested on Juliet, their expression changed, and for a moment his face contracted as though with a spasm of pain.

"Always there!" he repeated under his breath, and turning abruptly, went away.

Mr. Lennox rose, and began to pace meditatively up and down, according to his custom when preoccupied.

"I can't make it out," he said all at once, coming to a standstill. "That musician of yours is a fine fellow — a noble fellow; after what has passed between you one hardly dares to accuse him of fickleness of purpose, yet he seems to shrink from talking about his dearest friend. Did you not notice it, child? He was not only reluctant to speak of her, but positively seemed to dislike the sound of her name; yet

I understand he owes her everything. Do you think they can have quarrelled?" — in a tone of relief — "Young men are so headstrong; there may be some passing coolness between them. I should not like to think him fickle or ungrateful. Has he ever spoken of her to you?"

"No," returned she, adding almost passionately, "how could he when it was she who drove us apart? Oh, I know she did it for the best, and perhaps it *was* best, but it was cruel."

"Ah," returned her father, after pausing to readjust his ideas: each fresh hint of the hitherto unplumbed depths of his daughter's heart came as a revelation to him. "Ah, of course; to be sure; Christian must certainly know that it was she who separated you. Yes, I suppose it is natural that he should resent it."

"He must know; I think he must know or he would have been more angry with me for going away. He has not even asked me for an explanation, so he must surely realise that I did not leave him from caprice, or — or — want of — "

"Want of love, eh?" said Mr. Lennox, pinching her cheek half sadly. "That curious woman — that friend of his — accused me once

of making little diagrams of my heart in order to let the world know its exact condition. You, Baby, can keep your secrets better, but I fancy he knows a good deal."

And with that he went away, leaving Juliet a prey to a medley of emotions.

It was true; she felt it to be true; Christian knew, must always have known that she loved him. She need feel no shame at the consciousness of it; should she not rather be proud in realising that he had never once doubted her, that he had evidently divined the motive of her flight and gauged the strength of her love by the cost of her sacrifice? It must be so, since he seemed to have taken up their courtship at a point beyond that at which it had been abruptly cut off; he had divulged his secret to her on that moonlight night long ago at Stättingen, but, though five years had intervened, he had not yet asked her for her answer. He knew it already: as he had said himself, there was no need of words between them. And yet, as the girl told herself, half shrinkingly, for she hardly as yet dared to put the thought into definite shape, it would be sweet to make the confession to him, to lay bare her heart with all its secrets. All that would come some day; he must choose a day, he must be

the first to break this delicious silence by speech more precious still. Oh, she was well content to wait.

Nevertheless the recollection of her father's words and a certain sense of expectation made her more shy with Christian than she had hitherto been when he appeared next day. He, too, was silent, and a little constrained. He sat down beside her for a few moments on first arriving, but presently went to the piano, where he began to play the second movement of the Waldstein. He missed a note when about half-way through, and immediately jumped up with an angry exclamation, and shaking his hand.

"I play it at my recital," he said; "and it goes so badly as that! I must go home and practise. I ought not to have come — but I cannot keep away."

"That should not be," returned Juliet, earnestly. "You should not let me be a hindrance to you. You know I would far rather not see you at all than in any way interfere with your art."

"Ah, you can say that," he cried, with flashing eyes, "so calmly? I *must* see you, I must pay myself back now for the years of which I have been robbed. I have been robbed," he repeated with increasing agitation. "You know

it — you know it. Oh, Juliet, why did you go away? All this time we might have been so happy, and you left me in the prison house."

Juliet stood up too, turning very pale and pressing her hands together. The moment had come then, but not as she had dreamed of late; rather as she had so often dreaded. Christian was demanding his explanation with a lowering face, and a voice that trembled with wrath and grief rather than with tenderness.

"It was — for your sake," she murmured almost inarticulately. "When Annola said that your career would be blighted — "

He threw out his hand quickly.

"Tell me no more," he cried in a choked voice, "no more, or I shall curse her! It was she, then? But I knew it. You were mine and she drove you away to wander over the world while I was kept in bondage."

He was striding about the room now, his face convulsed, his chest heaving, his words coming in gasps. Suddenly he stood still, opposite to her, with a passionate gesture.

"Oh, Juliet, why did you go away — why did you leave me? You should not have left me."

The words came out in a cry, such a cry as might have been uttered by one in extreme

physical anguish; his eyes were still full of angry pain.

"You left me alone," he continued incoherently, "and I wanted you; in all the world I only wanted you."

Juliet came a little nearer to him, and laid her hand upon his arm:

"Dear Christian, what does it matter now, since you are here? Have we not met at last?"

He heaved a deep sigh as of one awaking from a painful dream, and looked at her fixedly.

"What does it matter?" she repeated in a tone unconsciously caressing, while her sweet eyes looking into his told him — how much?

He sighed again and his face relaxed.

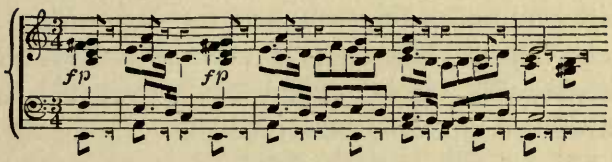
"After all, the spirit is not bound — can never be bound. Mine belongs to you; it has always been yours. You know it?" he added in a lower voice.

"Yes," said Juliet, simply.

He stooped and kissed her hands very reverently and gently, and then, loosing them, went away without another word.

Juliet stood motionless looking at her hands, on which she still seemed to feel the pressure of his lips. And yet he had kissed them as one might kiss the hands of the dead.

CHAPTER V



THE musician did not appear for a few days, and Juliet had begun to feel vaguely depressed and uneasy, when one morning he suddenly walked in.

"I have been working so hard," he cried, "so hard that my poor brain is quite — how would you say? Muddled. I must rest to-day; I must have a holiday. I have come to take you for a walk, Juliet."

"A walk," ejaculated she, somewhat taken aback. "Do you forget that we are in London?"

"Have you not parks — gardens?" he inquired quickly. "Is it possible that you are thinking about the convenances. The convenances between you and me, Juliet — how ridiculous!"

"This is not Stättingen," returned she, laugh-

ing, and then becoming grave again. "Are we not very happy here where no one interrupts us?" she went on somewhat wistfully.

"We are very happy here," he said, and then paused, adding dreamily, "but I want to be out with you under the trees and the sky, with the grass beneath our feet. I want to bring back Schönwald. It is a fancy — what would you have? Well, will you come?"

"Yes, I will come," said she.

They took a hansom to Kensington Gardens, where they wandered blissfully under the trees, keeping well away from the nurses and children who chiefly pervade the place at such an early hour, and feeling indeed as completely isolated from the rest of the world as though they found themselves in the forest at Schönwald. The light-heartedness of those former days seemed to have returned to both of them; Christian in particular was in the wildest spirits, and appeared to have thrown aside for the time being every serious thought.

All at once, however, for some unexplained reason silence fell between them, and when Juliet spoke it was in a pensive tone.

"Is it not strange, Christian, that though we have taken up life again so naturally we should know so little about each other? At least I

know very little about what you have been doing these five years."

The brightness flitted from his face as the sunshine from a hillside when the sky becomes overcast.

"You know I have been to Japan," she went on, laughing, yet with an underlying note of seriousness, "and I know you have made a successful tour in America; but about you —you, yourself—you have not told me much."

His eyes were fixed on the ground, and he paced beside her without speaking.

"Do you not want to tell me?" she went on with gentle persistence.

He turned and faced her, catching at her hand, his face alight once more, but this time with inexplicable passion.

"Are we not well as we are?" he cried. "Is it not better to forget that we have ever been parted, that anyone ever came between us? You are so good, Juliet—I am almost afraid of your goodness. Perhaps if you knew too much about me you would change to me."

"You know that is impossible," said she, in a low voice. Her colour was coming and going, and tears were standing in her eyes. "There is nothing you could tell me that could make any difference."

He wrung her hand with almost feverish excitement.

"If you say so, why should I doubt?" he cried agitatedly; then, seeming to recover himself, he went on more gently:

"But after all, why should we think about the past? The present is ours. To-day — now — when we are together."

"And is not the future ours too?" she thought within herself, with a leaping heart, though maidenly reticence kept the words from her lips. Let him speak of the future at his own time. The present was enough — *now!*

They paced on again, in dreamy happiness if less childishly gay than before, and, as they were turning at the end of an unfrequented alley in order to retrace their steps, they suddenly came face to face with another couple, walking very leisurely arm-in-arm, and simultaneously came to a standstill.

"Christian," cried Juliet, "there are the de Galphis! I thought she was in Constantinople, but there she is, just the same as ever."

Christian had already taken off his hat and was flourishing it ecstatically. "Hurrah!" he cried, "Bravo! There they are, indeed. Quick — let us go to them."

He took Juliet by the hand, and they ran

forward together, Christian crying out as they went.

"See, madame, we are here. Nous voilà, cher comte. Behold us. What a surprise! Nicht?"

The dear old lady had dropped her husband's arm and was waddling towards them as fast as her short legs would carry her.

"A la bonheur!" she shrieked. "What brings you here, mes enfants?"

By this time her spouse had arrived on the scene, and warmly grasping Juliet's hands informed her joyfully that she had a very good complexion. Addressing Christian in his turn, he repeated the same statement with, if possible, increased enthusiasm; and seeing that the young couple appeared somewhat surprised though they both laughed, he hastened to add that of course he meant a good sanitary complexion.

"Ach!" cried the countess. "Was für Dumheit. Il veut dire que vous avez bonne mine. But what a rencontre! The world's a very small place certainly. N'est-ce pas, Ignace, le monde est une très petite place? And to think that only the day before yesterday we met Bobo."

"Bobo," cried Christian and Juliet together,

adding simultaneously, "what luck! What brings him here?"

"Neither more nor less than his honeymoon," returned the old lady. "Oh, Bobo is a very important person now I can tell you; a married man and a Professor into the bargain. Professor at the Brussels Conservatoire. What do you think of that? We made our traversée together from Ostend."

"Bobo married!" ejaculated Christian, with an odd look.

"Bobo a Professor!" cried Juliet, laughing. "Oh, he must come and see us — where is he staying, Countess? I must ask him to come and see us."

"You may come and see him this very day if you like," cried Madame de Galphi in high glee, "and Madame Bobo too. They are both coming to tea with me at four o'clock this afternoon. Do come; and you too, Herr Thal. It will be like Stättingen over again. I've got rooms at Carlyle Mansions — not fashionable, but quite respectable. I'll give you a good tea — Juliet, you shall help me to make tea in the same little teapot; you know the little teapot that has travelled all over the world with me. Now I mustn't keep my husband standing in this treacherous May wind. Je dis, mon ami,

qu'il faut continuer notre petit trot. Ce Mai vent est traiteux."

Christian's eyes met Juliet's, and they smiled; it was delightful to hear their old friend's peculiar idioms again.

"It was luck," said the count; "it was a good luck for us that we imagined to take our temperamental in this direction."

Madame de Galphi laughed with keen enjoyment.

"He is just as funny as ever," she said in a confidential aside to Juliet.

And she went away chuckling to herself and sublimely unconscious of any little oddities of diction on her own part.

Christian and Juliet were the first to arrive that afternoon at Carlyle Mansions, where they found Count de Galphi enveloped in his dressing-gown and smoking an immense cigar, while his wife was bending over the fire, on which was insecurely balanced a very large and very black kettle obviously found on the premises; the little china tea service, which Juliet remembered of old, was set forth on the table flanked by a noble supply of the most unwholesome-looking cakes procurable for money. A delightful atmosphere of Bohemianism pervaded the apartment, and the countess was in her glory.

"Sit there," she cried, pointing emphatically to the sofa, "sit there, facing the light so that he may recognise you at once. I would not miss seeing Bobo's face for twenty pounds. Bon! Here they come!"

At this moment, indeed, the door was thrown open, and the little servant, unable to cope with the pronunciation of the newcomers' name, announced after a fashion much in favour with her kind:

"A lady and gentleman to see you, ma'am."

In came Bobo in his usual precipitate manner, Bobo apparently just the same as ever, a little broader, perhaps, and possibly a little shaggier, but with the same incalculable amount of angles about his person, and the same good-humoured ugly face, now radiant with smiles.

He threw himself upon the countess's hand; dashed across the room, upsetting a chair as he went, to seize the count's, and, catching sight of Christian, staggered back with an expression of incredulous delight, darted forward again, and finally flung himself into his arms, crying rapturously aloud between tears and laughter:

"Christian, Christian, you here? Is it possible? Ah, ça, mon vieux, quel chance! Ah, ah, je n'en reviens pas. Ah, my dear Christian!" and then more embracings, more rapturous

handshakings, more inarticulate protests of joy and affection.

Christian was very calm, very happy, very much amused; but when the demonstrations had gone on for some little time he called his friend's attention to Juliet, whose laughing face and extended hand Bobo had not yet observed.

"Here, too, is someone who is glad to see you," he said; "do you not remember Juliet, Bobo?"

"Do I remember Juliet?" gasped Professor Michotte. "Ah, my dear good Juliet, this is indeed a happy day. You permit?"

Somewhat to her astonishment Juliet found herself enfolded in his arms and embraced in brotherly fashion on each cheek.

"It is my wife who will be delighted," he exclaimed; "come here, Jeanne, come here, my mignonne, that I may present thee. Here is Juliet — the dear Juliet of whom thou hast often heard me speak; and here is Christian Thal, the great Christian Thal, our pride, our joy, our genius. There he is — what an honour for thee, hein? Thou mayest embrace her, Christian."

Christian, with a laughing glance at Juliet, bestowed the required salute, which Madame Michotte, a pretty little plump blue-eyed woman,

Flemish by nationality, received with the utmost placidity. Then, as the countess was observed to stagger under the weight of the tea-kettle which she was carrying across the room, Christian flew to her assistance, while the rest of the party seated themselves at the table, the little bride being careful to secure a place next to her big ungainly husband whom she obviously adored. Indeed, during the greater part of the meal the pair sat artlessly hand in hand; while more than once when the little lady had distinguished herself by some sally, Bobo was constrained to announce that she was really adorable, and to embrace her without ceremony. The manner in which he flourished his right hand, adorned, according to the custom of his race, with a brand-new wedding-ring, amused more than one of the guests; indeed, Count de Galphi, observing him, on one occasion, turning this ring round and round with a conscious smile, was obliged to remark upon it.

"One sees well that you are a young-married," he observed with a chuckle; "the alliance is new to you, is it not? New, and also very agreeable."

As he spoke as usual in English, Madame de Galphi proceeded to translate for Bobo's benefit.

"Mon mari parle de votre bague de mariage," she explained, continuing to make the rest of her husband's remarks intelligible to the musician after her own fashion.

"But yes," cried Bobo, jubilantly, turning to the count, "it is indeed for me an agreeable, a delicious sensation to feel this little circle on my finger, reminding me as it does that I am a slave, a prisoner, held fast by fetters which it would be agony to break."

Christian stopped short suddenly in some gallant speech to Madame Michotte, and looked round.

"In your place I would not wear it," he cried in a curiously harsh voice. "Fetters must always be galling even when they are forged by oneself" — then, turning again to Madame Michotte — "Surely it cannot be your wish, madame, that your husband should consider himself fettered? In such matters there should be no constraint. You know that his heart is yours — is not that enough?"

The little woman stared at him with round astonished eyes, and then said good-humouredly enough:

"Frankly, if you others, messieurs les artistes, have such droll notions about marriage I think it as well that my husband should wear his

alliance. It may be sometimes a useful remembrance."

"I would not wear it," cried Christian, vehemently; "an artist to be hampered by such things. A musician above all. What! Each time that one lays one's hands upon the keys to be reminded that another has claims even upon your art — I would not endure it."

"Pfui," exclaimed Madame de Galphi, "these are pretty sentiments! Do not listen to this young madman, Ignace; I cannot have you demoralised."

Juliet's face flamed, and the consciousness of colouring increased her sense of confusion. She felt wounded to the heart's core, astonished, even angry — a rare event with her. Surely such an attack coming from Christian under these circumstances known to him and her alone was inexplicable — positively insulting.

Bobo's words did not tend to improve matters.

"Ta-ta-ta-ta, my boy, there speaks Ignorance. You will think very differently when the time comes."

"Certainly," cried Madame de Galphi, "he must ranger himself — and I should not be surprised if he did soon," she added, with a meaning glance at Juliet. "With such wild

views as those, my friend, you certainly want someone to take care of you."

"Yes, you should marry, Christian," said Bobo; "nearly all of us that were in the class together are married now. Rosie — you remember Rosie? She was très gentille, la petite, was she not? Well, she has married a rich banker — a rich Jew banker, and they say she hardly ever touches the piano now. Is it not a pity?"

"Was Rosie the little Scotch girl whom you used to call Dumpling?" inquired the countess, with her head on one side and a malicious twinkle in her eye as she glanced at the bride.

"Dump-ling?" queried Madame Michotte, pricking up her ears. "It is a funny name. Why was she called Dump-ling?"

"Because, my cherished one, she was rather fat," returned the new-made husband, hastily. "She used to play so well; but so well! And now she is married to a Jew banker. And Károly, he also is married — to an actress. It is a pity that."

There was silence for a moment, and then Bobo continued, pursuing his previous train of thought:

"It is folly what you say there, Christian, about its being degrading to an artist to wear

a wedding-ring. It is on the contrary a source of perpetual pride and joy. Believe me, when one is away from the beloved it is a great satisfaction to feel her ring upon your finger and to think — 'She is mine. It is no dream — she is mine.' And to one's art — parbleu! it is a stimulant. When one sees the flash of it as one's fingers run over the keys one thinks of her, one says to oneself — 'All this for her' — can you not understand it?"

"Yes," returned Christian, in an altered voice, "I can understand it." He pushed back his chair and rose from the table.

"I must go back to my work," he said; "my holiday is at an end. Adieu, madame."

He was bowing over Madame de Galphi's hand, but she drew it sharply away.

"Nonsense, what fly stings you that you must rush off like this? You will not see Bobo again, perhaps. They are only in London for three days."

"Why this rage for work, my dear fellow?" put in Michotte, plaintively. "I have a thousand things to say to you."

"Come round and see me to-night, then," returned Christian, "late, quite late. I shall be practising till then. My recital takes place in a week now."

"In a week! And alas, we shall not be here. No, we cannot stay for it; I must get back to my post. But we shall hear you in Paris perhaps; we go there for the New Year. And you will come to Brussels without doubt?"

"Without doubt," echoed Christian, mechanically. He shook hands with Bobo and the count, and then turned to Juliet.

"And you," he said, "how will you go back? I ought not to hurry you away."

"You need not worry about me," returned she, in a tone of affected lightness, though her lip trembled. "I will stay here a little longer and then find my own way home."

He cast a keen look at her, taking note of the trouble in her face which immediately became reflected in his own, hesitated for a moment, and then sat down again.

"No, I will wait," he said.

But the gaiety of the little party seemed to be destroyed, and a certain constraint settled on them all. Before very long Madame Michotte, looking meaningly at her husband, began to put on her gloves and announced that it was time to go. Count de Galphi wrapping his dressing-gown more closely round him accompanied them as far as the lift, and his wife took advantage of his absence to inquire sharply

of the remaining young pair what was amiss between them.

"When I saw you walking this morning," she said, "you seemed happy enough; but now, what's the matter? I don't understand you."

Juliet did not answer, and after a moment's hesitation Christian spoke.

"Madame," he said, "I am not easy to understand—very often I do not understand myself. But you, Juliet," he added appealingly, "you, I think, always understand me—the better part of me."

But Juliet was still ruffled and hurt.

"I do not understand you to-day," she said, and rose to take her leave.

"Never mind him, my dear," said the old lady as she embraced her, "men are the oddest creatures and it doesn't do to pay attention to them. Even my count has his moments. As for you lovers, of course you will have fifty quarrels without their meaning anything. *Prut*, do not deny that you are lovers; I have eyes in my head, I suppose."

Greatly to the girl's relief Count de Galphi entered at this juncture and announced his readiness to escort them, too, to the lift.

Christian broke silence when he and Juliet found themselves side by side in a hansom.

"I have hurt you," he said.

"Yes," she returned with downcast eyes.

"Yet I would give my life to save you pain. Oh, Juliet, it might have been better if we had not met."

"Do you say this to me now, Christian?"

"I say it," he returned vehemently, "but I do not feel it. I feel that it was well, well, that we have met. I grudge every moment that is not spent in your company. An hour with you is worth a lifetime. I would walk barefoot to the end of the world for a glimpse of your face."

"Christian, Christian, why do you talk so wildly? And how you contradict yourself, don't you?"

She was laughing now, a wavering uncertain laugh that was very near to tears. He meant what he said now, whatever might have been his motive for the tirade of a little while ago; she could not doubt it and the relief was great.

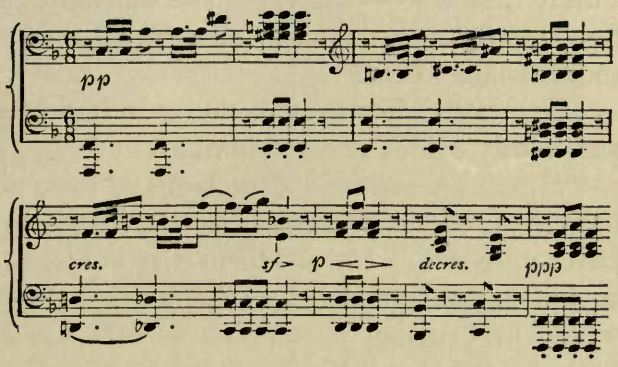
"When I spoke of fetters," cried he, "can you imagine for a moment that I was alluding to you?"

Then what did he mean, the girl asked herself, dismissing the thought, however, almost as soon as it came.

"I am yours; remember it," he cried still passionately; "all that is best in me is yours. My heart is yours — my soul is yours. Never doubt it."

She put her hand in his, and they spoke no more until they reached her house.

CHAPTER VI



IT was the day of Christian Thal's recital. The great hall was filled, more than filled, densely packed from floor to ceiling. There was not even standing room in the galleries.

Juliet sat almost preternaturally still, her heart beating tumultuously, her face white; the platform on which Christian must presently appear seemed to swim before her eyes; she felt rather than saw the great concourse of people. Her father, conscious of her natural agitation, though not fully aware of its extent, endeavoured to distract her mind during the period of waiting by calling her attention to this or that personage of interest.

"It is not merely a fashionable assemblage," he said, "your friend seems to draw notabilities of many kinds, and particularly musicians. Surely that is —— the violinist; and those are two remarkable heads up there to the right of the balcony. Look."

Juliet raised her eyes to the spot indicated, and a little colour came to her cheeks.

"Those are two of Professor Adlersohn's former pupils," she cried. "I remember their faces quite well. I heard them play at his class at Stättingen. I suppose all the members of the school in London are anxious to hear Cæsar, as they used to call him."

"Aha, Cæsar?" said her father.

"Yes, it was a name they gave him because of his ambition," she returned with a little laugh. "He always vowed he would vanquish the universe."

Her father glanced once more round the hall.

"Well, his prophecy already seems likely to be verified," he said.

At this moment enthusiastic applause announced that Christian had stepped forth upon the platform.

Juliet drew a long breath, and, as he came forward bowing gravely, tried to fancy what impression he was likely to produce upon such

units of the vast crowd as then beheld him for the first time. To her he was Christian, her Christian, the first among men, inexpressibly beloved; his face, his gait, every little trick of manner dear to her because a part of himself. How did he strike others? Surely everyone must see how noble he was, how graceful, how dignified. It seemed to her, indeed, as he faced the crowd that day, that he possessed a certain majesty of bearing which even she had never before noticed. What was it her cousin had said? "He seems to be miles and miles above one." And what was that bygone boast of his? — "I never find myself in the midst of a crowd without feeling that I have the power to dominate it." Well, he dominated this vast concourse to-day; he was already its master. The magnetic force of his personality swayed it before he had so much as laid his fingers upon the keys.

He stood for a moment, viewing the sea of faces and listening to the tumultuous applause, as a man might stand upon the shore watching the incoming waves and harkening to the roar of them, to all intents and purposes alone. He was alone, alone with his art — that art which would presently enfold, uplift him, and with him the listening throng around. Yet not entirely

alone, for even as he turned towards his piano he cast one swift look along the row of stalls where Juliet sat, and their eyes met; and she knew that he took the thought of her with him. When he played she felt as though her spirit was being drawn forth from her body and wafted with his on those exquisite sounds up, up to the high regions where all was beauty and peace.

Suddenly a thunder of applause rent the air, and she came down to earth again to find Christian once more bowing to the audience, and her father wiping his eyes.

"He is a wonder," he said; "a great man — a genius indeed."

Juliet smiled faintly; had she not always known it?

And now he was playing again, and once more her soul was drawn to his, and it seemed to her that they communed at ease, they two alone; he was putting his love into definite form, telling her all about it, now with sweet iteration, now introducing some subtle exquisite change.

And again there was silence, and then once more a tumult of enthusiasm.

"Ten minutes' interval," said the Professor, looking down at his programme; "shall we go into the Artists' Room?"

"No, Daddy; I couldn't," said she.

He looked down at her quickly.

"It has been almost too much for you," he said. "Well, little girl, let me tell you that even I feel proud to-day — for your sake. I have never heard such music; he is like no one else."

Juliet smiled again: of course he was like no one else. Oh, she was proud, not of his triumph, but of *him*, of himself, of the mind that could conceive such beauty, of the hands that could interpret it; above all, of the heart which she seemed to hear pulsing through every gradation of sound, ever repeating the refrain meant for her alone — "*My soul is yours, my soul is yours.*"

Her very stillness and silence caused curious glances to be turned upon her, and she, becoming suddenly aware of them, cast down her eyes lest they should betray her blissful secret.

A programme lay open on her lap, the words dancing before her gaze: *Beethoven*, *Chopin*, *Schumann*. What did it matter whose music he played? she thought to herself. He made of it what he would.

It was over at last; even the ovation which had greeted Christian at the conclusion had

come to an end, and Juliet stumbled out with the rest, clinging to her father's arm.

They had reached the air, found their carriage and proceeded for some way on their homeward journey before the Professor spoke.

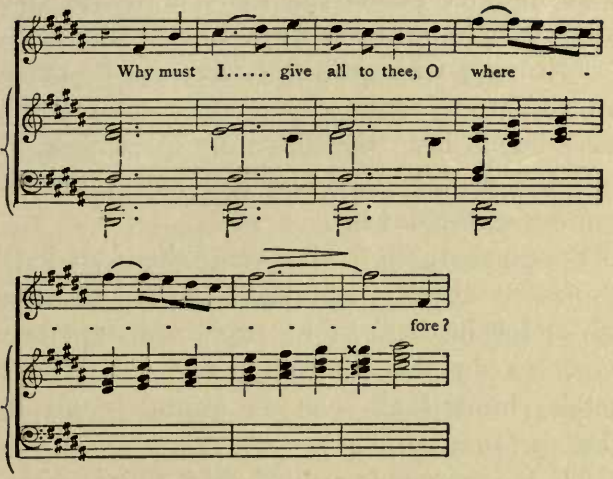
Leaning forward and looking at Juliet with dreamy eyes, he murmured very softly:

"'I will come to the visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man . . . (whether in the body I know not: God knoweth) such an one rapt even to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth) that he was caught up into Paradise; and heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter—'"

He broke off, smiling.

"I thought of this several times while Christian was playing, yet it is not entirely appropriate. He hears the words indeed, but it is granted to him also to utter them."

CHAPTER VII



JULIET came down to breakfast, pale after a sleepless night; one of those "white nights" which had been frequent with her of late, and during which she had lain awake from pure bliss. She scarcely felt weary, so great was her exaltation of spirit; she would even have been reluctant to spend in oblivion time better employed in dwelling on the events of the previous day. Every doubt seemed now set at rest, every fear done away with. Lest anything might have been wanting to complete

the happiness of this day of days, Christian had come in for a few moments just before bedtime, exhausted, but supremely content; they must have another holiday, he said; he would come in good time on the morrow to take her out.

"Now he will speak," Juliet said to herself over and over again in the night. "The time has come at last; he will surely speak now."

Small wonder that she had longed for the coming of the dawn.

Punctual though she was, she found the Professor already installed at the breakfast table; for he had, as he explained, important work to do that morning, and intended to betake himself as soon as might be to the British Museum.

"I, too, am going out," said Juliet, with a smile. "Christian is coming early to take me to Kensington Gardens."

"Aha," said Mr. Lennox, with a laugh and a shrug of the shoulders; "you are very unconventional, you two young folks; but I suppose your little affairs are practically settled. By the way — here is a letter which concerns you more than me. It is from Bulkeley. It seems news of your engagement has already reached Stättingen, and the good people there are on tiptoe with excitement."

"My engagement!" exclaimed Juliet, and stopped short with a conscious little laugh.

"You think the announcement is rather premature?" returned her father. "That is the penalty one pays, you see, for associating oneself with great men like your Christian. But it matters very little, after all. There, read it for yourself."

He propped up the *Times* in front of his plate, according to his custom; leaving his daughter free to peruse the letter which he had tossed across the table.

To anyone less single-minded than Juliet, Bulkeley's letter would have appeared constrained, and not altogether devoid of an element of sadness; but as she had never been conscious of the tender admiration which would, had Horace dared, have ripened into something warmer, she merely took note of the contents of the missive without paying any heed to the mental attitude of the writer. She uttered little exclamations every now and then, which somewhat interrupted the Professor in the assimilation of his leader, and he, according to his custom, looked up with a smile or a nod, or a brief response, and immediately became absorbed again.

Thus, "So it was the Countess de Galphi,

after all!" Juliet cried on one occasion; and again — "How their tongues must have wagged at that tea-party!" And once, with something akin to petulance, "I wish people would not discuss one's private affairs."

When she reached the fourth page of the letter, however, her face changed. "Annola Istó was there! Well, Daddy, you have news of her at last."

Mr. Lennox looked up, giving Juliet all his attention this time.

"Yes, I was glad to hear she was well," he said. "I am not quite satisfied with Christian's attitude towards her. You see, Horace says she complains of his not having written for weeks. She actually declares that her last letters to him have been returned to her through the post; he has not even had the civility to inform her of his whereabouts. I cannot but think this wrong, my dear. You should take him to task for it."

Juliet turned to the letter again.

"I wish Mr. Bulkeley had not given her my address," she murmured. "She says she is going to write to me. I — I — she — oh, I wish she wouldn't write to me! She will only say disagreeable things. She will only try to come between us."

The Professor folded up his newspaper and took off his spectacles.

"You should not rush to conclusions, child," he said almost severely. "You are unduly prejudiced against a very attractive and intellectual woman. Fräulein Istó could have no possible motive for wishing to interfere between you and her friend now. His position is made; his training is complete; he may consider himself independent of her, though motives of gratitude and delicacy should naturally cause him to consult her before undertaking any great change in his life. It should do so, I say," he added, in a more indulgent tone and relaxing into a smile, "but young men are hot-headed, and I dare say there is a certain pardonable sense of irritation, I might even say resentment, lingering in his mind when he recalls her former conduct. Events have proved, my dear Juliet, that her action in this matter has had the very best results. Some day you will probably confess as much, though I suppose it would be too much to expect of you or your Christian just yet. Take my advice, Baby, and be generous to that poor woman — both of you. After all, she grudged no personal sacrifice for the benefit of Christian's career. Now I'm going to my Museum; you can, if you like, pass

on some of my sage counsels to the young man when he arrives."

He gathered up his letters as he spoke, and, as he did so, caught sight of an unopened newspaper lying amid the pile beside his plate.

"This is directed to you, I see," he said; "take it up with you, child. It is a German paper, I believe — yes, here is the Stättingen postmark. Perhaps Bulkeley sent it to you. Well, I haven't time to wait till you open it. Take it up with you."

Juliet went upstairs examining the wrapper as she went. It was directed in the regular pointed hand common to those who habitually employ German characters; the writing told her nothing: she might have seen it before or she might not.

She went into the drawing-room where a flood of sunshine greeted her, the fresh breeze making the curtains wave as she opened the door. Through the French window the flower-bedecked balcony showed bravely bright; the room itself was full of delicate flower scents. Juliet glanced round: Christian would soon be here now; it was well to ascertain that all about her was at its best. She pushed forward a chair, moved a vase or two of flowers, and opened the piano; then, as she sat down leisurely in her

accustomed place near the instrument, she stripped off the wrapper from the newspaper.

It was a small sheet of familiar aspect, a copy, in fact, of a certain journal to which Countess de Galphi had regularly subscribed during her stay at Stättingen, and which had been much beloved by that lady, for it was its custom to supplement its Fashionable Intelligence with various delectable items of local gossip.

The paper which Juliet held was folded in the middle and marked in one place with two large crosses in red ink. She read the title at a glance:

"Romance of a Musician," and crushed up the paper, reddening and biting her lip.

It had got into print already. How dared they! How dared they before Christian himself had torn apart the veil of silence which shrouded this most sacred and most intimate secret! Their love tale had not yet been fully told — and here it was blazoned forth in print!

She smoothed out the paper, and again sought the place, her breath coming quickly, her cheeks burning.

All at once her eyes dilated, and she gazed at the paragraph as though fascinated, the colour ebbing from her face as quickly as it had come.

What was this? What could this mean?

"It may interest all admirers of the talented artist, Mr. Christian Thal, to learn one of the most romantic episodes in a very romantic career. This, perhaps, most celebrated of Professor Adlersohn's pupils, who at the age of five-and-twenty finds himself already on the pinnacle of fame, has been married for some years to an interesting and remarkable lady well known in Stättingen. The marriage, for reasons best known to the contracting parties, has been kept secret till the present time, but now that the young musician occupies so prominent a place in the eyes of the world it would be manifestly unfair to withhold from the public such an important fact in the life of one in whom it takes so great an interest."

Juliet fell back in her chair, dropping the paper from her hand, pallid, motionless, stunned. Her eyes, dark under her gathered brows, looked forth blankly.

"I shall understand soon," she said to herself; "I shall know soon what it means."

At that moment she felt nothing but a sort of dim surprise, such as might befit one recovering from an anæsthetic and finding himself stretched on the operating table. Soon consciousness would come, and with it overwhelming pain.

Still gazing before her with those dazed eyes,

she saw the door open and Christian entering the room.

He uttered an exclamation at sight of her, and hurried towards her; and moving one numb hand with immense difficulty she pointed to the paper.

He stooped and picked up, not the paper, but the wrapper.

"Annola sent you this," he cried.

So it was Annola! thought Juliet; then she once more designated the journal.

He snatched it from the floor, and walked with it nearer the window, though indeed the room was flooded with light. Juliet turned her head a little so as to follow him with her eyes, and saw that his hand shook.

After what seemed to be an interval of a thousand years he flung the paper on the floor and came towards her.

"Juliet!"

Her eyes were still fixed on his face, but she did not speak.

"Have you nothing to say to me, Juliet?"

He stretched out his hand, and she, rousing herself suddenly, caught it in both hers and turned it over; then she raised her anguished eyes to his face and said hoarsely, with a twitching lip:

"Christian, why do you not wear your wedding-ring?"

He had become white to the lips, but returned her gaze steadily.

"You have heard my reason," he answered. "I do not choose to be reminded of my chain."

The clutch of the little ice-cold hands relaxed; he drew away his own, and looked at it and then let it drop.

Juliet had fallen back in her chair once more, being indeed too weak and dizzy to sustain herself. Her eyes still looked questioningly into his — questioningly, but not incredulously. She knew now; she was beginning to understand.

He bent over her suddenly, maddened by their dumb pain.

"Why do you not speak?" he cried; "why do you not reproach me?"

She did not answer except by a gentle shake of the head, and he, with a groan, stooped over her lower still; he would have kissed her, but that with a cry she pressed both her hands against his breast, endeavouring with all her strength to push him from her.

"Ah," he cried, starting back, "you love me no more! You love me no more!"

"Oh, Christian!" she said with a sob, "indeed it is not because I do not love you."

He made no attempt to approach her again, but sank down on the music-seat, covering his face with his hands. After a moment, Juliet rallied herself and sat up.

"You must tell me about it," she said.

He turned round so as to face her, his eyes not meeting hers, however, but bent upon the floor. He was as pale as she, and beads of anguish stood upon his brow.

"It was two years after you left me — at my first concert at Stättingen. It was a triumph, they said. She was standing in the doorway, and I saw the tears pouring down her face. You know I owed her everything. I thought my success would have repaid her, but it was not enough. I looked in her face and saw that it was not enough. I had never imagined such a thing before, but when I saw — oh, I don't know why I did it; I was excited, overstrung — it seemed to me that her claim was paramount — and you had gone away."

"I see," said Juliet, "I understand."

"She wished it kept secret," he went on, "and I — I did not care. No one guessed — we had always been together, you see. It is she of course who has put this announcement in the paper."

Silence fell between them.

He could not look at her, and after a moment, heaving a deep sigh, turned round upon the music-stool, and let his hands wander absently over the notes.

Juliet leaned forward plucking at his arm: "Not to-day, Christian, do not play to-day!"

He broke off, looking round at her with a frown; then suddenly turning to the piano again, brought down his hands upon the keys once more with a crash, and the opening notes of the Storm Study came thundering out.

"No, Christian, no," cried Juliet, almost with a wail. "Not that! I cannot bear it."

He paid no heed to her, but played on like one possessed, filling the room with a very tempest of sound. Another tempest raged within the souls of both.

Juliet started up at length, dragging his hand from the keys, and he, too, sprang to his feet. His face was convulsed. For a moment they stood still, gazing at each other, with terrified eyes.

Presently, with a gasp, Juliet pointed to the door.

"You must go," she whispered.

"Oh, what folly!" he cried. "We cannot part — you know that we cannot part. We must never part again."

He caught her hands and they fluttered in his grasp like imprisoned birds.

"Destiny is too strong for us," he cried hoarsely. "It has driven us together — you are mine and I am yours — You know you cannot live without me."

"Yes, I can live without you," she said, and with a supreme effort she loosed her hands. "With God's help I will never see you again."

He fell upon his knees at her feet, clutching her dress, kissing it, pouring forth broken words; but she stooped and gently strove to disengage herself.

Looking up pleadingly he saw the despair in her eyes.

"How will you bear it?" he gasped; "if you drive me from you, how will you bear it, Juliet?"

He caught her hand again and for a moment she let it rest in his, a tremor passing over her frame. Then she braced herself and looked down at him bravely.

"I can bear it," she said — "I will bear it. There is only one thing I could not bear — that you should — that you should fail! I think that would kill me."

"But I want you," he cried; "I only want you — I want nothing but you in the world."

"But I want more — oh, much more for you. I will not have you untrue to yourself. You — *you* are more to me than our love. Oh, I am so little and you are so great — I will not have you cast away your greatness."

He pressed his burning lips to her hand and then lifted up his head, his eyes catching something of the inspired light in hers.

"Christian," she went on earnestly, "Christian, remember the Edelweiss! Never forget the Edelweiss!"

He loosed her hand and stood up: "My soul is yours," he said slowly; "you shall do with it what you will."

Their eyes met and she saw that his were dim.

"It is you who are my Edelweiss," he said falteringly. "My white flower — I will leave you in your snows."

And Juliet realised with an exceedingly bitter pang that she had conquered.

* * * * * * * *

Professor Lennox thought the room was empty when he opened the door, but soon caught sight of Juliet crouching in her chair.

"Ah, you have come home, I see. Has our friend gone already? I thought he would have stayed to-day, perhaps, and played to me.

To-morrow, to-morrow I must hear him. You look very white, my dear" — coming nearer to her — "you have over-tired yourself, I fear."

"Christian will not come to-morrow," said Juliet, in a faint voice — "oh, Daddy, he will never come again. I told him not to come again. He is married!"

"Married!" cried her father, with flashing eyes, while the colour rushed to his face. "Married! Then how did he dare — "

"Oh, don't, please!" said Juliet, feebly. "I — I — I suppose there are no such things as broken hearts, but I feel as if mine were broken."

The Professor's own heart was hot within him, yet the sight of her grief-stricken face caused him to choke down his wrathful curiosity and turn his attention to the task of consoling this cherished child. Many a wise saying fell from his lips that day, many a telling aphorism; many a favourite theory, often meditated on and appreciated by himself, was brought to light for his daughter's benefit, his eyes scanning her face the while with the most acute anxiety.

"Do I help you at all?" he asked all at once.

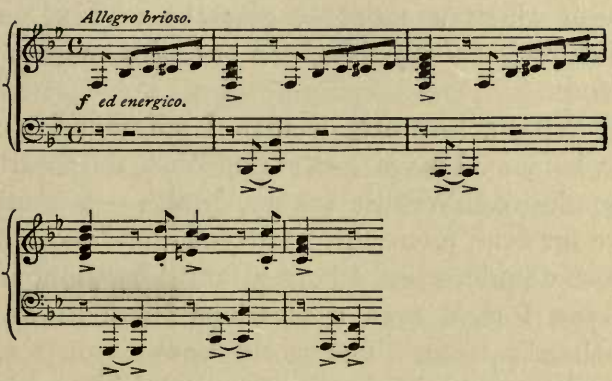
"No," said Juliet, with an irrepressible sob.

And then he went down stiffly on his knees beside her chair and took her in his arms, fondling her with tender incoherent words: "My little bird — my darling — my poor Baby."

"That helps me," she said, and clasped her hands about his neck with a passion of tears.

PART IV

CHAPTER I



"AH! Monsieur Michotte? Charmed to see you. My husband has not yet appeared, but he will not be long now. He generally works till dinner-time."

Bobo dropped the hand which he had been holding, with a little laugh. "What a contrast, madame, hein? What a contrast to the old times."

He glanced round the luxurious room: Christian Thal's Paris home wanted indeed nothing that artistic taste could devise or money pro-

cure. Annola herself, in a handsome dress carelessly put on, looked out of place as its presiding goddess. She had aged much of late; her sallow face was pinched and drawn, and her manner was more restless than ever.

She threw herself into a chair now, with a laugh which was not so pleasant to hear as Michotte's naïvely delighted one of a moment before.

"What a fortunate woman I am, monsieur, am I not? I have everything that the heart can desire. Wealth, luxury, health — I shall live for ever, monsieur, I tell you that" — here those unquiet eyes of hers gleamed — "honour — yes, I have even a vicarious share in my husband's fame. The world knows, you see, that it is to me he owes a measure of his greatness. Ah! I assure you I am to be envied."

Bobo shot a keen glance at her from beneath his shaggy brows and nodded; he was never at ease in the presence of this woman, and to-day she made him feel more uncomfortable than ever.

"You have every reason to be proud of your husband," he said gravely, after a pause. "What a man! Ah! what a man! Madame, I swear to you that each time I hear him I am filled with fresh wonder. I, even *I*, his old comrade, who have heard him so often in the School. I tell

you, madame, every artist owes him a debt of gratitude. Here in this decadent age, when Art itself has become debased and debauched, he has uplifted it, breathed into it a new spirit — become, in a word, an Apostle — the Apostle of Music. There, do you see, I can hardly speak of it — I am carried away by enthusiasm."

"So I perceive," said Madame Thal, drily; adding, with an undisguised sneer, "You would agree without doubt with the writer in the 'Guide Musical' who declares that one might imagine oneself listening to the playing of an angel."

"Not at all," returned Bobo, hotly. "An angel? Nothing of the sort! Christian's playing is distinctly human — it is even passionate, but with a spiritualised passion that has in it something divine."

Annola sat upright, flashing a strange look at him.

"And what is my part in all this?" she asked.

"Your part?" he stammered.

"I ask you, what is my part? Since he would not have been a musician at all without me — I must perforce have a share in his great work. There, do not trouble yourself to answer me — you are not one of those who lie

with ease. To change the subject, I believe there is a telegram waiting here for you."

"A telegram," ejaculated Bobo, his face lighting up. "It must be from my adored one. De grâce, madame, let me see it!"

Annola rose and crossed the room to the chimney-piece, from which she took the despatch in question.

Michotte tore it open, reading half aloud: "'*All well, a thousand kisses.*' Ah! my little Jeanne."

He pressed the paper to his lips.

Annola burst out laughing.

"You carry sentiment a little too far, my friend. Are you aware that you are kissing the words scrawled by some poor devil of a telegraph clerk?"

"Madame," returned Bobo, whose face was still radiant, "it matters to me little by whom the words were written. It is the thought that I embrace — the thought of her. I will pay, from this distance, homage to the affection which prompted the message. It is the first time we have been separated, you see; I could give her no indication of where I should be staying to-night, but she knew that I should hasten to see Christian, and so the blessed little woman sends the greeting to me here."

"Ah! so you have never been separated," said Annola, carelessly. "Does Madame Michotte accompany you then when you go on tour?"

"Until now, madame, she has done so," he returned, with a sigh, "but henceforth I fear it will be impossible. We have now three children. The mother naturally could not leave her little ones, and on the other hand it would be difficult to travel with such a family. Alas! I and my cherished one must in future submit to periodical partings."

"So much the better for your art," returned Annola, sharply. "Do you think I accompany my husband when he travels? Never. From the first I told him I should not expect it."

Bobo bowed with an embarrassed look. It seemed to him that the cases were not parallel.

"So you have three children, now," she went on, taking up the conversation at a fresh point, as the pause threatened to become wearisome. "How old are they, if one may ask?"

"Madame, our eldest boy is two years and eleven months old, and the youngest is six weeks. Between them comes our little girl — our little angel Juliette."

"Ah!"

A kind of convulsion passed over Annola's

face, and she fell into a moody silence until the entrance of Christian some minutes later.

The four years which had elapsed since his parting from Juliet had given him additional dignity of bearing. The lines of his face were stronger; it was less mobile than of old, but was composed, even placid in expression. The man had learnt to hide his thoughts. His face lit up, however, as he grasped his friend's hand, and he asked him many questions eagerly and rapidly with regard to himself, his family, and his work, all of which Bobo answered enthusiastically. Presently dinner was announced, and Michotte, giving his arm to his hostess, conducted her to the dining room.

Bobo talked incessantly during the ensuing repast, being conscious, nevertheless, of an increasing sense of constraint. Annola was so silent, so restless; eating little, but fidgeting perpetually. Her dark eyes, as they wandered from him to her husband, had an unusual gleam in them, and her face was flushed.

"Here sits the most miserable woman in the world," thought Bobo; "and yet is not her life as she has made it?"

Presently, in giving an account of his experiences, Michotte chanced to mention that he had recently been to London, bringing out the

announcement with some difficulty, and feeling, rather than seeing, the effect produced on both husband and wife. There was a momentary pause before Christian responded, very quietly, that he had no doubt his friend had been well received in a city where music was so much beloved. During that pause he had fixed his eyes questioningly on the other's face, and Annola, leaning forward in her chair, had uttered a smothered exclamation.

"Ma foi! one lives here on the edge of a volcano," was Bobo's mental comment, and he hastened to pass to a less disquieting subject.

At the conclusion of this very uncomfortable meal, Christian, rising, came round the table, and tapped his old comrade on the shoulder.

"Now, my friend, you come upstairs with me. I will show you my atelier — it is a real work-shop; and you must play to me. It will be good to hear you play again."

"I play to you? What a farce, my dear fellow! But I will do it — it will bring back the old days."

They went upstairs together to a large room at the top of the house — a studio, built by some former occupant. In one corner of it stood Christian's grand piano. The vast room was almost bare of furniture; its simplicity

contrasting with the evidences of luxury perceptible in every other part of the house.

"One breathes more freely here!" exclaimed Bobo, involuntarily.

There was a lamp on the centre table, and the light, though it failed to penetrate to the further corners of the room, fell full upon Christian's face as he sank into a chair beside it.

Bobo drew up another close to him, and, leaning forward, tapped him lightly on the knee.

"Christian, I have seen her."

"Ah!" said Christian. He turned a little way from his friend, and leaned his elbows on the table, shading his eyes with his hands. But Bobo, from where he sat, could see the lower part of his face, and noted a momentary quiver of the lips. After a pause —

"Is she well?" asked Christian.

"She is well," responded Michotte, adding, after another silence, "for the rest, she is — as always."

His eyes sought Thal's face once more, but this time the lips told no tale.

"I spoke to her of you," went on Michotte presently. "I told her of your work, and how nobly you were fulfilling your mission; of how you had revolutionised the world of music, up-

lifting your hearers, and convincing them that the best and most beautiful in Art, as in life, is the highest and the purest."

Christian dropped his hands, and turned round, with a long sigh.

"Ah! my friend —" he was beginning, but broke off; adding, after a moment, "But she — what did she say?"

Bobo's voice shook a little as he answered.

"She said, 'His feet are on the mountain tops.' Ah! Christian, if you could have seen her! Her eyes were full of tears, and yet I swear to you there was joy in her face — such joy as might be found among the angels."

Christian rose and began to pace up and down the room. "The mountain tops," he repeated half to himself; "Yes, Bobo, yes! it is her wish that I should climb, but the heights are very lonely."

"Ah, my poor friend," cried Bobo, rising and catching him by the hand. "The heights! do I not remember how she always longed that you should reach them? Was it not I who brought you the Edelweiss that day so many years ago? Yes, yes, I did not understand it then, but I do now." He wrung Christian's hand again, and would have said more, but that at that moment the door was thrown open

and Annola appeared, holding up one corner of the heavy portière.

"Well, Monsieur Michotte, are you not going to play?" she cried harshly.

"Ah, madame, how you startled me! I did not hear you approach; that great curtain seems to shut out all sound."

"It is intended to shut in sound," said Christian, in a curiously constrained voice. "My wife, do you see, is sometimes wearied by the sound of my piano."

"Then, certainly, I had better not inflict my music on her," returned Bobo, with a clumsy attempt at a joke.

Annola, without replying, made an imperious motion towards the piano, and flung herself into the chair which he had vacated. At the close of his first piece, however, she rose abruptly and went out of the room.

Neither of the men made any comment upon her sudden departure, neither did they return to the topic which had been under discussion when she had entered.

It was late when Bobo took his departure, but Christian remained pondering in his upper room for long after he had left.

It was past one o'clock, indeed, when the curtain was once more lifted, and the figure of

his wife appeared, still in her evening dress and carrying a bedroom candle-stick.

She set this down upon the table, and walked close up to her husband.

"Are you going to remain here all night?"

He started up angrily, closing his hand hastily over some small object which had been lying before him on the table.

"Annola, this is too much," he cried. "There are times when I must have privacy."

"Oh, of course!" she returned, almost hissing the words; "it is I — I, the wife, who am the intruder. You wish to be alone, I suppose, that you may brood over that cursed Edelweiss."

He made an indescribable gesture that was at once appealing and dignified; one would have said that he was enfolding himself in a mantle of reserve. But she went on with heightening passion:

"The Edelweiss! the Edelweiss! Do you think I did not guess why it was you carried it about you day and night? I guessed — and I know now. *In excelsis* — to the heights!" — bursting into a peal of hysterical laughter — "ah, it is she who makes you climb, does she? and I — what do I do?"

He turned upon her almost savagely.

"Do not tempt me!" he exclaimed. "Do

not make me say that which neither of us can ever forget."

"Do you think I will endure it?" she shrieked. "I tell you my life is a hell; to be here beside you, always looking upon your face, always hearing your voice, and to know that we are as far asunder as the poles. To know that I am nothing to you — nothing — worse than nothing — an encumbrance — a burden to be endured! while in your heart of hearts there is an inner shrine, consecrated to the thought of her."

"Annola, I beseech of you," he cried brokenly.

But she cut him short excitedly.

"But I will live — I will live, if only to keep you apart. If pain could have killed I should have been in my grave years ago, yet you still see me here. I tell you I will not die — I tell you — "

"Hush! there must be no more of this," he said. "I, at least, will not stay to hear you."

He turned quickly, and she, throwing herself across the table, caught him by the sleeve. He looked round with an impatient movement, but even as he did so uttered a cry. In her passionate eagerness to detain him she had taken no heed of the lighted candle on the table, and the gauze draperies of her dress were on fire.

In a moment she was wreathed in flames, her face still distorted by fury, looking out from the midst of them with most terrible effect. As he stood transfixed with horror she rushed from him screaming.

"Throw yourself down!" he cried, recovering his presence of mind. "Throw yourself upon the floor, Annola — it is the only chance! My God, there is not even a carpet here! — Ah, the portière."

A violent wrench from his frenzied hands brought it down and he rushed towards her holding up the heavy fabric, and calling to her imploringly to be still.

She turned towards him, a frightful spectacle, her dress already reduced to tinder, her very hair aflame, her eyes glaring at him from her tortured face.

"Let me burn!" she cried savagely; "let me burn, and you will be rid of me!"

He threw himself upon her, his weight carrying her to the floor, and wrapped the plush folds closely about her, pressing out the flames with feverish anxiety.

Suddenly, with a shriek of such anguish as her own extremity had not wrung from her, she cried:

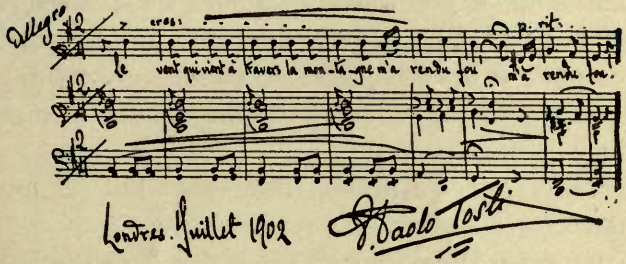
"Your hands, Christian! For God's sake remember your hands!"

"Do you think I will see you burn to death before my eyes?" returned he, clasping her more closely still.

"Your hands," she repeated, her voice sinking to a moan, "your precious hands! Oh, Christian — let me die!"

She struggled in his arms, but her efforts quickly became faint, and when Christian relaxed his embrace he found that she was unconscious.

CHAPTER II



WHEN Annola opened her eyes some hours later, they rested upon Christian's figure. He was sitting by the side of her bed, gazing at her sorrowfully. Her eyes — the only living things about her, as it seemed, sought first his face, and then glanced at her own swathed, inert limbs.

"This is death, I suppose," she said.

He bowed his head.

"Oh, Christian," she said with a little gasp, "would that I had died last night with your arms about me, and the knowledge in my heart that you were thinking of me — last night when you risked what is more precious to you than life, for my sake! — Christian, your hands?"

He held them out; one was swathed in bandages.

"They are uninjured," he said reassuringly; "a few blisters, that is all."

"But they might have been destroyed! Oh, Christian, if you knew — if you knew what I felt! Oh, if I could have died then! And yet I am glad to be alive, because there is something I must do. How long do they think I may live?"

"My poor Annola, they say but a few hours."

"I must live longer than that," she cried, with something of her old energy. "I must live another day at least. Christian, you must do something for me."

"I will do anything in the world you ask," he said, bending over her tenderly.

Looking down on this poor wreck of womanhood, he forgot her wrongs towards him, forgot even the acute suffering she had brought upon one far dearer to him than himself — remembered only that she, his old comrade, the friend and protector of his childhood, was dying.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"You must telegraph for Juliet, at once. Ah! you must not refuse," as she saw him involuntarily draw back. "I must see her — I must

speak to her before I die. Oh, why do you hesitate? Can you not trust me *now?*"

It seemed almost miraculous that anyone who had received such frightful injuries as Annola, could manage to live even a few hours, yet by sheer strength of will she kept Death at bay until Juliet stood by her bedside.

Juliet was pale and trembling; her whole form indeed shivered as her eyes met those of the dying woman.

"You need not fear me now," said Annola, while those hollow eyes of hers were lit up with a passing glow. "I have sent for you to atone."

"Oh, do not try to speak!" cried Juliet, with tears starting to her eyes. "Oh, Annola! poor Annola! how dreadful to see you like this!"

"I feel no pain," said Annola. "I had to live until you came. I want to give him to you, myself. He is mine still. You shall only take him from me. Christian, are you here?"

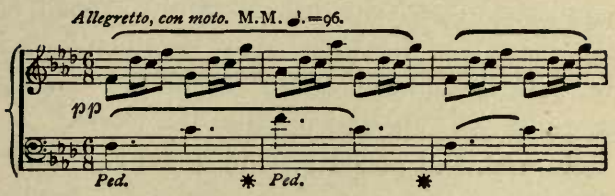
"I am here," said he, in an unsteady voice.

The ruling passion was indeed strong in death, yet somehow this evidence of it filled him with overwhelming compassion. Poor Annola, poor, ardent, wayward woman! It was characteristic of her to cling thus desperately to him to the very last.

"He is mine," she repeated feebly, "but he

shall be yours now, yours, because I give him to you. I give him to you of my own free will. I wish you to marry and be happy. I have never been happy. I snatched at everything that I wanted in life, and yet I hold nothing — nothing but emptiness and shadows — the reality always escaped me. But you — you — " She broke off, looking from one to the other with eyes that were fast growing dim. "Clasp hands," she said.

EPILOGUE



CHRISTIAN glanced up at the balcony of the Lennoxes' London house as he rang the bell: it was gay with flowers. Spring had come again; spring, full of brightness and promise.

The door opened immediately: he had been expected. Professor Lennox himself came out into the hall to greet him.

"She is waiting for you, my boy," he said, as he grasped him by both hands. "Go up to her — she is waiting."

Christian bounded up the stairs with a step almost as buoyant as that which had characterised him in his boyish days.

The old man looked after him, smiled to himself, rubbed his hands, and disappeared into his study. There he immediately dropped into the nearest chair and wiped his eyes.

"My little girl," he said. "My little girl! After this long trial — sunshine at last. Well, I shall have to part with her, so there must be a few clouds somewhere. She has earned her happiness — yes, she has certainly earned her happiness, and he too. Any shortcomings in the past have been nobly atoned for — he has raised himself up, and uplifted the world."

He rose, and paced up and down the room a moment or two, restlessly; and then went to the door, opening it softly, and listening.

"I don't hear the piano to-day," he said to himself. "Well, well, together they will sing to the Lord a new song. New, and yet the same as in the beginning. The canticle of canticles, indeed. 'I to my beloved, and my beloved to me.'"

THE END

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

NON-RENEWABLE

JAN 0 8 1999
ILL/Step.
DUE 2 WKS FROM DATE RECEIVED

REC'D LD-URL
FEB 1 7 1999

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 115 500 1

Un